Practical Agitation

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PRACTICAL AGITATION

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PRACTICAL

AGITATION

BY

JOHN JAY CHAPMAN

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DEDICATED

TO

The Memory

OF

THEODORE BACON

PREFACE

THIS book is an attempt to follow the track of personal influence across society. The first three chapters are taken up with discussions of political reform, the fourth chapter with contemporary journalism. The results of these discussions are then summarized in the chapters called "Principles."

I know that there are as many ways of stating the main idea of the book as there are minds in the world. That idea is, that we can always do more for mankind by following the good in a straight line than we can by making concessions to evil. The illusion that it is wise or necessary to suppress our instinctive love of truth comes from an imperfect understanding of what that instinctive love of truth represents, and of what damage happens both to ourselves and

to others when we suppress it. The more closely we look at the facts, the more serious does this damage appear. And on the other hand, the more closely we look at the facts, the more trifling, inconsequent, and absurd do all those reasons appear which strive to make us accept, and thereby sanctify and preserve, some portion of the conceded evil in the world.

J. J. C.

New York, February 5, 1900.

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PRACTICAL AGITATION

I

ELECTION TIME

It is the ambition of the agitator to use the machinery of government to make men more unselfish. In so far as he succeeds in this, he is creating a living church, the only sort of State church that would be entirely at one with our system, because it would be merely a representation in the formal government of a spirit abroad among the people.

Campaign platforms are merely creeds. "I believe in Civil Service Reform" is a way of saying "I do not believe in theft," and the phrase was a fragmentary and incomplete formulation of the greater truth. It was the sign that a movement was beginning among the people due to reawakening instinct, reawakening sensibility. It was the forerunner of all those changes for the better that have been spreading over our administrative government during the last thirty years. A quiet revolution has been going forward under our

eyes, recorded step by step. It is only because our standards have been going up faster than the reforms came in that we believe the evils are growing worse. Such changes go on all the time all over the world, but the value and rarity of this one come from its unity and coherence. Such a thing might happen in Germany or in England, but you could not disentangle the forces.

Thirty years ago politics was thought to be no occupation for a gentleman. It was a matter of bar-rooms, ballot-box-stuffing, rolls of dirty bills. You had as little to do with it as possible. You voted your party ticket, you paid your taxes. You bribed the ashman and the policeman at your uptown house, and the clerk of the court, the inspector, the custom-house agent, and the commissioner of jurors at your office.

That subtle change of attitude in the citizen towards his public duty which is now in progress, has in it something of the religious. The whole matter becomes comprehensible the moment we cease to think of it as politics, and see in it a widespread and perfectly natural reaction against an era of wickedness. Had our framework of government afforded no outlet to the force, had our ills been irremediably crystallized into

formal tyranny, we should perhaps have witnessed great revivalist upheavals, sacraments, saints, prophets, prostrations, and adoration. As it is, we have seen deadly pamphlets, schedules, enactments, documents which it required our whole attention and our whole time to understand; and behind each of them a remorseless interrogator with a white cravat and a face of iron. What motive drives them on? What oil fills their lamps? Who feeds them? These horrid things they bring, these instruments forged by unremitting toil, technical, insufferable, — they are the cure. With such levers, and with them only, can the stones be lifted off the hearts of men. They are the alternatives of revolution.

"Reform" may have a thousand meanings, and be used to cover a thousand projects of doubtful utility. But with us it has a definite meaning. When the foreigner says, "Ah, but is your reform the right remedy?" he thinks it is a question of policy, or of the incidence of a tax. He supposes there is an intellectual question. But with us the problem is how to protect an attorney against a dishonest judge; how to stop the sheriff from stealing a fund, pending the litigation.

What we want to do, what we are doing,

is to get rid of gross malpractices, gross theft, gross abuse of public trust. It is waste of time to expend learned argument on a judge who has been bought. The litigants must join forces and get rid of that judge before they can talk. Of course we know that the real trouble with our politics is that these attorneys have themselves bribed the judge and share in the division of their clients' property. It is to questions of this kind that the conscience of the country has been drawn.

There is nothing peculiarly sacred about politics, but the history of reform movements during the last few years furnishes such striking and wonderful illustrations of human nature that it is worth study.

A few men have a desire, a hope of improving some evil. They stagger towards it and fall. The impulse is always good. The mistakes made are progressive. They record the past; they outline the future. If you draw an arrow through them, it will point north.

If you arrange the reform movements against Tammany Hall in a series, and consider them minutely, you will find that the earlier ones are comparatively corrupt, sporadic, disorganized, ignorant, and short-

sighted in purpose. They have steadily become more honest, more frequent, more coherent, more intelligent and ambitious. If you examine any one of them, it would be impossible to misplace it in the series. Looking more closely, you see the reason. The earlier the movement, the more zealously do its leaders imitate the methods of current politics. Each movement represents the philosophy of its era. We have had: 1. The frankly corrupt era (fighting the devil with fire). 2. The compromise era (buying reform). 3. The educational era, which began two years ago, after Low was defeated, when people said they were glad of the movement, in spite of the defeat. Note this, that Low did not lead a lost cause, nor was any belief in lost causes at the bottom of his movement. But in making the best of his defeat, many minds stumbled into philosophy. And this illustrates the progress of an idea. People will accept it as an explanation of the past before they will take it as a guide to the future. It glimmers before them at a moment when they need comfort, and vanishes in the light of a comfortable habit or prejudice. This apparition of the educational idea flitted across New York and took root in many minds.

Now the smoky torch of reform has passed from hand to hand, and is beginning to burn brighter. How could the original darkness give forth more than a gleam? All progress is experimental. The architects discovered by practice that the arch would support itself. Their earlier efforts were tentative. You can see what notion they had in mind, as they very gradually learned how to subserve the laws of gravity and tension. Each improvement is qualified by its author's limitations, but shows a gain as toward the immediate past. You are following the steps of the groping and fumbling mind of man, fettered at every point by his own conceptions, moving each time towards a bolder generalization, each stride forward exactly proportionate to the breadth of thought on which it is calculated.

What other method is there? The men who fought the Tweed Ring did what passed for "politics" in their day. "Votes must be paid for, of course; but let the people vote right."

The philosophy of the Strong movement in 1894 showed an advance. "The plunder must be divided, of course; but let *us* have it because we are virtuous."

The Low movement in 1897 appealed to

voters on the ground of self-interest. Labor had to be conciliated, local politicians of the worst sort subsidized; $150,000 was spent, four-fifths of it in ways that did more harm than good. But the methods were delicate.

The battle of the standards goes forward ceaselessly; but all standards are going up. What the half-way reformer calls "politics," the idealist calls chicanery; what the idealist calls politics, the half-way reformer calls Utopia. But in 1871 they are discussing whether or not the reformers shall falsify the returns; in 1894 they are discussing whether or not they shall expose fraud in their own camp.

The men engaged in all these struggles are in perfect ignorance that they are really leading a religious reaction. They think that since they are in politics the doctrines of compromise apply. They are drawn into politics by conscience, but once there, they have only their business training to guide them, — a training in the art of subserving material interests. Now if a piece of your land has an uncertain boundary, you have a right to compromise on any theory you like, because you own the land. But if you start out with the sole and avowed purpose of

upholding honesty in politics, and you uphold anything else or subserve any other interest whatever, you are a deceiver. When you began you did not say "I stand for a readjustment of political interests. There will be a continuation of many abuses under my administration, to be sure; but I hope they will not be quite so bad as heretofore. I shall not insist on the absolutely unselfish conduct of my office. It is not practical." If you had said this, you might have got the friendly support of a few doctrinaires. But you would never have got the support and approval of the great public. You would not have been elected. And therefore you did not say it. On the contrary, what our reformers do is this: They begin, before election, by promising an absolutely pure administration. They make proclamations of a new era, and after they have secured a certain following they proceed to chaffer over how much honesty they will demand and how much take, as if they were rescuing property.

These men are, then, in their desires a part of the future, and in their practices of the past. Their desires move society forward, their practices set it back; and so we have moved forward by jolts, until, like a

people emerging from the deep sea, the water looks clearer above our heads and we can almost see the sky.

Every advance has cost great effort. It took as much courage for a Mugwump to renounce his party allegiance in 1884 as it does now for a man to denounce both national parties as dens of thieves. It took as much hard thinking some years ago for the leaders of the Reform Democrats to cut loose from Tammany Hall as it does now for the Independent to see that there is in all our politics only one machine, held together by all the bosses and their heelers, and that the whole thing must be attacked at once.

How gradual has been the process of emancipation from intellectual bondage! How inevitably people are limited by the terms in which they think! A generation of men has been consumed by the shibboleth "reform within the party," — a generation of educated and right-minded men, who accomplished in their day much good, and left the country better than they found it, but are floating to-day like hulks in the trough of the sea of politics, because all their mind and all their energy were exhausted in discovering certain superficial evils and in fighting them. Their analysis

of political elements left the deeper causes mysterious. They did not see mere human nature. They still treated Republicanism and Democracy — empty superstitions — as ideas, and they handled with reverence the bones of bogus saints, and the whole apparatus of clap-trap by which they had been governed.

And yet it is owing to the activity of these men that the deeper political conditions became visible. Men cannot transcend their own analysis and see themselves under the microscope. The work we do transforms us into social factors. We are a part of the changes we bring in. Before we know it, we ourselves are the problem.

The Mugwumps revolt and defeat Blaine. They strengthen the Democratic party. They again revolt and defeat Bryan, and strengthen the Republican party. So in the little towns all over the country, on local issues the Democrats are put out for being dishonest, or the Republicans are put out for being dishonest. Through this process the younger generation has been led to note one fact: both parties are dishonest. "Ah! but," says the parent, "I am a good Democrat. My party is not dishonest all the time. It needs discipline." It is too

late: the young man hates both parties equally. He now looks at his father, and sees in him a sample of corrupted intelligence, a man able to repeat meaningless phrases, and he draws hope from the conclusion. It was natural that the father should have been boss-ridden all his life, because he could be whistled back to support iniquity by an appeal to party loyalty. He belonged to a race that had lost the power of political initiative. They could not act alone. They must daub themselves with party names or they would catch cold. They had not the stomach to be merely men.

Thirty years ago one-half of society thought that every Democrat was a rebel and a scoundrel. The world to that society was composed of two classes, — Republicans (righteous men), Democrats (villains). Twenty years of an almost steady growth in the power of self-government or of what the Germans would call civic consciousness, has barely sufficed to strike off the adjectives, but it has left mankind still divided, as before.

Meanwhile there has emerged a group of men who see the whole problem in a much simpler light. These men have carried

forward the analysis which their fathers, or let us say their elder brothers, had begun, to such a point that there are no words in it which are meaningless, no factors which are not reduced to terms of human nature. They did nothing but add the last link to a chain of logic. Their predecessors discovered The Machine, and spent their lives in trying to belong to a party without strengthening its Machine. These latter men discovered that both parties were ruled by the same Machine. They see one issue, and only one issue in American politics, namely, the attack on that Machine.

Moreover, these men have political initiative; that is to say, they contemplate creating conditions, and not merely making transient use of visible conditions. Their idea is so simple that any one whose mind is not warped by the cant of party politics understands it at once.

"All this political corruption is a unity. Vote against it and you will beat it. Vote for any part of it and you strengthen it." This sounds simple. But in practice the prejudices, the interests, the passions and political temperament of the whole population are against it. Every argument that the people understand is against this course.

Everything that either party fears or hates in the other party is passionately pointed out as a reason against independent voting. According to Republicans, independent voting involves "allowing Croker to extend his rule over the entire State," and "enabling Tammany Hall to control the judiciary," and "endangering the cause of sound money." According to Democrats, it involves the encouraging of Trusts, Tariffs, Pensions, Expansion and foreign conquest. According to both Democrats and Republicans, independent voting is "voting in the air," and is at odds with the spirit of our institutions, which contemplate two parties and no more. And, finally, every one condemns the independent because he violates that thumb rule which slovenly thinkers regard as a summary of all political philosophy, "Between two evils choose the least."

Now the answer to all these arguments is that they are the merest mirage. It makes no difference which of the two evils, Platt or Croker, has the name of ruling the State. At present they divide the rule between them. They can do no more. There is no argument that can be used against Tammany Hall which is powerful enough to make the Republican Ring trustworthy. There is no

argument against Expansion so excessively convincing that it changes the moral character of the Democratic Party. These learned arguments are useless, ludicrous, pathetic, irrational, impotent, contemptible. They do but distract us from the real issue — which is personal corruption. Where shall a man cast his vote against it? If I turn out McKinley because he bleeds the natives, I put in a Democrat to bleed the natives. If the whitewashing of Alger arouses public indignation, Tammany Hall feeds at the trough. If Croker's control of the judiciary arouses popular indignation, Platt's pigs feed at the trough. As for sound money, we have already elected one Congress on the issue in 1895, just as in 1892 we elected a Congress on the tariff issue. What was done? Why, in each case that was done which the ring wanted done, — nothing.

Which national party stands for an idea to-day? The only shadow of reason for believing that either does, is that the Republicans cried sound money and won. They have done nothing. Had Bryan won, he would have done nothing, could have done nothing.

There are no issues in American politics save this one issue of common honesty.

You cannot throw an issue into this whirlpool of vice, for your issue turns to cash by the contact. We need not waste our time reading the platforms drawn by Platt and Croker. We must not vote for any man who does not go into public life as their enemy, because we know that in so far as he is not their enemy he is ours. As for these dreadful consequences that are always about to follow from a refusal to support one end of the iniquity, they do not follow. We have the evils now. We are at the worst. The powers of darkness may conspire and heap all in ruins, but they must not prevent us from beginning upon a constructive line to draw together and build up the powers of light.

Nor is there the smallest distinction either in the evil or its cure, between the case of a village, of a State, or of the whole nation. Say you live in a town; you can only get a clean school-board by running men against both the regular parties. There is no other way of getting rid of Hanna and the Presidential Syndicate than by running an independent candidate for the Presidency. No form of Bryanism will oust it, — no rump Democracy nor any kind of Democracy. Democracy is finished. Republicanism is finished.

This is the zero point of party loyalty. It has been reached very slowly. It means open war. The citizen is now confronted with a third ticket, which is a deliberate insult to both the others. No matter what the conditions, it is an appeal which disintegrates the emotions of the voter. This is the very elixir of reform. People are forced to think. It hurts them. They cry out against those who create the dilemma, but they cannot escape it. The vote you poll will vary. If the party war-cries are intense and the party candidates promise fairly, very few men will see the point of your movement. But no one escapes its influence. Let us say that five thousand vote your ticket. These are the only men whose response is scheduled. But the political vision of five hundred thousand has been quickened. No atom of this influence is lost. The work was done when the vote was cast. Even if it be not counted at all, it will show in every political camp in the near future.

But do you ever have outward success? Does the time ever come when the standards of every one are so high that the parties themselves present candidates as good as your own, and there is no excuse for your existence? That depends upon the trend of

the age. One thing only is certain, that by pursuing this course you are doing all that you can do. You are wasting no power. No part of your force is helping the enemy.

After all, the great discovery is a very simple thing. We have found, after many experiments, that what we really want is, not the turning out of officials, not the enactment of laws, but the raising of the general standards. The way to do this is to set up a standard. Of course nobody likes to find a foot rule laid against his shortage. Even the vocabulary of the average man is attacked by such a system. Words like "courage," "honesty," "independence," "pledge," "loyalty" pass current like clipped coin in the language of politics; and the keying up of words to their biblical value brings out one man a thief and the next a hypocrite.

All these civic commotions, great and small, that surge up and are scatttered, that form and reform, the People's Leagues and Citizens' Unions, are the altruism of the community fighting its way to the surface through the obstructions, the snares, and the oppressions of the organized world. No discouragement sets it back. No betrayal destroys it. The people come forward with ever new faith.

What ceaseless endeavor! What patient trial of various forms of organization! We live in a society where egoism is so thoroughly organized that there is hardly a flicker of faith that cannot be made to heat the devil's pot. The dragon stands ready to eat up the child as soon as it shall be born. You cannot hitch your horse to anything without helping drag the juggernaut. Before you know it, virtue is pocketed. Take the most obvious case. The reformers imagine they are in politics and must win at all costs. One enthusiast calls twenty friends into a room and organizes a club — and the club ties his hands and sells out to the nearest bidder. Before he knows it he has been organized back into Tammany Hall. You begin with a call to arms and a plan of organization. The men come to you in a moment of hope, showing every shade of intelligence, every stage of opinion, — one because he believes in your candidate; one because he hates Tammany Hall; one because he wants prominence; all because they do not expect to be alone. The men who volunteer have not a clear notion of what they are in for. They thought it was a movement to clean the streets. In the course of their campaign it develops into

an attack on a bank. They thought it was a town movement. Some stage of it affects national politics. They thought it was a Roosevelt movement. It turns out to involve hostility to Roosevelt. Your muster shows the vague hope of a lot of men who are utterly incompetent, undisciplined, ignorant. They are merchants, lawyers, doctors, professors, clergymen, the respectability and intelligence of the town; and so far as self-government goes they are the tattered children of tyranny. Good God, what an army! At the first trumpet they scatter. One sells out, one recants, one disappears. They are anywhere and nowhere, a ship of fools, a barnyard. The execution of the one idea for which they were brought together has scattered them like sheep.

Let us take another case. You think that what is needed is to raise a standard. You call your twenty friends about you. They are not corrupt. Nevertheless, let us see who they will be. We are not dealing with an imaginary community, but with American citizens as they exist, with men every one of whom trusts his instincts to a different extent. Each man believes in principle in the abstract, but thinks it is sometimes hopeless to be severely virtuous in politics.

This "sometimes" is the *crux*. "Is it the time? Is this the year? Can you do it this way?" Now, of course, it is always the year. It is never hopeless. Absolute honesty is always the way. But an age of corruption destroys faith. This is the essential injury. This is the disease. You yourself have a little stronger belief, a little more political enterprise than your twenty friends. Otherwise it would be they who were summoning you to a conference. It is certain that their joint wisdom will result in action less radical than you believe in. They outvote you in council. The standard they set up is not absolute. But this outcome will prevent you from making your point at all. If you are to back your friends up publicly and are honest yourself, all you can say will be, "Here's a makeshift." Now, the public instinct understands this very well already. Ten per cent of your own faith you have compromised. It has cost you ninety per cent of your educational power; for the heart of man will respond only to a true thing.

What is it that has led you to compromise? Why, the age you live in. You yourself, being afraid to stand alone, have dipped your flag, with the best intentions, because

you cannot see that any other course is practicable. Yet you yourself can keep your own intellectual integrity only at the price of destroying your own handiwork. If you do not destroy it, you are a hypocrite. Here in the room with you were twenty men, the very flower of the idealism of the town, not chosen by accident, but coming together by natural selection. Twenty more like them do not exist in the community, for their activity would have revealed them. And yet there was not found faith enough among these to set up an absolute standard. Nay, they hang on your arms and prevent you from raising one. If you are to do it, you must do it alone. Then these men will be the first to denounce you; for your act damns them. You can only be true to the public conscience by rebuking your friends. If you fail to do this, your banner is submerged.

Let us consider the cause of this weakness in Reform organizations. You wish to appeal to the people with as good a show of names as you can. And so you get a lot of well-known men to indorse you. This is considered practical. Let us see if it is.

We are fighting Tammany Hall. But no one will for an instant admit that every Tammany man is dishonest. The corrup-

tion we started out to correct was a corruption of the intelligence, a bad habit, a defect of vision. The same defect keeps Republicans in line for Platt, because he is the Party, a recognized agent of the community. The same defect prevents a just man from joining a new movement unless Banker Jones is leading it. The habit of the community is to rely on some one else to govern them. No man trusts himself. The Machine, upon analysis, turns out to be a lack of self-reliance. Wherever you see a man who gives some one else's corruption, some one else's prejudice as a reason for not taking action himself, you see a cog in The Machine that governs us. The proof of it is that he will dissuade you from striking the iniquity. He will explain that you can't try it without doing more harm than good. You will find that at every point of defence, from the arguments of Mr. Croker himself to the arguments of some sainted college president, the reasons given are identical. I cannot find any one who defends stealing. They only deprecate action as being inexpedient. Now, then, if I ask a voter to join my organization, and use as a bait an appeal to this very weakness — his reliance upon other men's opinion —

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can I hope to make much headway? I am taking in just so much of Tammany Hall. My whole body becomes an adjunct of Tammany, in the same sense that Mr. Platt's machine is an adjunct. I am Croker's last outpost. I stand there calling myself reform, and yet I do not act. Some one else must now come forward and try his hand.

This process of ebullition, and thereupon stagnation, has happened again and again. I suppose there are a dozen extant wrecks of reform political organizations in the city. Many people have despaired altogether. They think it is a law of God that political organizations become corrupt in the second year. The experience is entirely due to the persistent putting of new wine into old bottles. In their names and hopes these bodies have stood for purity, but in their membership they have, even in their inception, stood for prejudice. Then, too, the bottles bore good labels, and bad wine was soon poured into them. A political organization is a transferable commodity. You could not find a better way of killing virtue than by packing it into one of these contraptions which some gang of thieves is sure to find useful.

The short lesson that comes out of long experience in political agitation is something like this: *all* the motive power in all of these movements is the instinct of religious feeling. All the obstruction comes from attempting to rely on anything else. Conciliation is the enemy. It is just as impossible to help reform by conciliating prejudice as it is by buying votes. Prejudice is the enemy. Whoever is not for you is against you.

What, then, must the enthusiast do in the way of organization? Let him go ahead and do some particular thing, and ask the public to help him do it. He will thus get behind him whatever force exists at that especial time for that especial purpose. It may not be much; but no amount of letter-heads and great seals will increase it. Let him abandon written constitutions. Let him not be bound by a vote nor seek to bind others by a vote. If you have formal procedure, you are tied up, for you will then have to convert six tailors into apostles before you can get at the public. Content yourself more modestly. See a friend or two and tell them what you intend to do. If they won't help you, do it alone. Do not think you are wasting your time, even if no one

joins you. The prejudice against the individual is part of the evil you are fighting. If you keep on in a consistent line of action, people will come to you one by one, and your group will grow into a sort of centre of influence. There will result a unity of method as well as of aim, which, as your purposes become understood, will enable you to act with the speed of thought and the force of an avalanche. One great merit of this method will be that your whole policy will remain an enigma to every one except those who really want what you want, namely, to raise the general standards. Only such men will seek you out. Any one else is a danger. Thus your organization will grow slowly, but will remain uncapturable, un-get-at-able, an influence, a menace, a standard. As fast as adherents appear, you can set up centre after centre of enlightenment, preparatory to your campaigns; debates, pamphlets, correspondence, the battery of agitation. And in the mean time the benefit done to the workers themselves is worth all the pains.

By adopting formal machinery you would not only organize the wrong people in, but you would organize the right people out. New York City is full of men whose passion

for educating can find no vent in politics, because politics are corrupt, and who run civic leagues, night-schools, lyceums, and people's institutes. They are at work in your cause although they call it by different names. All this zeal is at your disposal if you will only leave your office doors open and do something to deserve its support. Do not adopt a scheme that excludes these men. You cannot impress them into your army, but you do not need to impress them,—only to know them personally. You cannot make them district captains, but they are district captains already.

"But," you say, "are not the votes of your twenty friends as valuable as your own? Whence this egoism?" It is not egoism. I am ready to follow any one who wants to do this particular thing, that is, make an appeal to absolute unselfishness, at no point to conciliate any one. "But this is anarchy: every man his own party." On the contrary, it is consolidation; for should two men arise, proposing this course, they would coalesce at once.

"But," you say, "who is to do all the work? How are you to get men to come forward unless you give them tangible, formulated doctrines, papers to sign, and

words to mumble?" The answer is that the men who do the work in reform campaigns do not need these things. Literature and doctrines you will undoubtedly produce. It is not necessary for the effective distribution of them, that you should adopt the parade of American party discipline.

Organization, head-quarters, and a distribution of labor you must develop. But you must not have them on paper faster than they exist in reality. "But," you say, "this is not representative government. Where are your convention, your argument, your vote, your majority, your loyalty? Our people must have these things."

The answer is that, in spite of their views on representative government, our people still remain human beings. As fast as they find themselves spiritually represented by some person or body, they follow that influence. It is representative government, but it represents only the positive and aspiring part of the community, — the part which never gets represented under your system, because that system insists upon alloying it with other elements and ruining its power. It is educational activity in the purest form. By what other means can you speak to the whole people at once in the language of

action? By what other means can you reach the conscience of the unknown man, who has not touched politics for twenty years because he could take no part in it, because he did not understand it, — the disfranchised, scattered, and dumb men on whose voice the future waits?

Consider what you are trying to do. A party under control of a machine is held together by an appeal to self-interest. Its caucuses, affiliations, resources, methods are constructed on that principle. Your body, whose aim is to increase the unselfishness and intellect of your fellow-citizens, must be held together at every point by self-sacrifice.

If the reform body shall blindly do just the opposite of what a party does, it will pursue practical politics. The regular party is in theory representative of enrolled voters. You represent the sentiment of undiscovered people. The party appeals to old forces and extant conditions. You appeal to new feelings and new voters. The party offers a gift to every adherent. You must offer him nothing but labor. That is your protection against traitors. The party accords every man the weight of his vote in its counsels. You must give him nothing but the influence of his mind.

"But," you shout, "this is not politics. You can never hold men together without bonds." The fact is otherwise. There is some force at work in this town which, year after year, brings forward groups of men who proclaim a new dispensation. They are, in so far as they have any cohesion, held together without bonds now. All formal bonds will chain them to the past. For electrical force you must adopt electrical machinery; for moral force, moral bonds. All this political system is the harness for the wrong passion. Every scrap of it imprisons your power. The average American citizen is slow to see that you can exercise political influence without the current machinery. This is a part of The Machine in his brain. He cannot see the operation of law by which virtue always tells. But his ignorance does not affect the operation of that law, even upon himself.

This elaborate analysis of just how the force of feeling in yourself can best be used politically, is, after all, only an instance of a general law. The shortest path between two points always turns out to be a straight line. People who believe in the complexity of life, and have theories about crooked lines, want something else beside moral

influence. They want influence through office, or influence toward special ends, or influence with particular persons. "Can't you see you are destroying your influence?" they cry, while every stroke is telling. "A thinks you are a lunatic." Praise God. "B has withdrawn his subscription." I had not hoped for this so soon. "But he has joined Platt." You misstate the case. He was always with Platt, but now he has revealed it. These refractory molecules are breaking up. See the lines of force begin to show a clean cleavage. Ten thousand intelligences now see the man for what he is.

At what point in the progress of this movement will people begin to see that it is practical politics of the most effective kind? Some people see it now. The first people to feel the strain are the men whose livelihood depends on the outcome. The last illustration of this was given in Roosevelt's campaign against Van Wyck in New York State. In this case, as generally happens, the real battle was fought in committee rooms before the forces were in the field. It was the struggle for position. Roosevelt was to be Republican candidate for governor, and was sure of election. The fight

came over the minor offices. Our New York form of ballot practically forces a man to vote for a "straight" ticket, and half a dozen independents put up a complete ticket with Roosevelt at the head of it. Their purpose was to prevent the Republicans from using Roosevelt's military popularity to sweep into office a lot of henchmen. Within ten days the Republican henchmen all over the State were taken with convulsions. Every crank of the Machine trembled. It turned its awful power upon Roosevelt and ordered him to get off the Independent ticket. He obeyed and protected the henchmen. The episode illustrates the practical power of a few independents who can act quickly. The panic in the Republican camp was entirely justified. If three tickets had remained in the field with Roosevelt at the head of two of them, thousands of Democrats and thousands of Republicans would have voted for the Reform ticket. The Republican ticket would have polled merely the dyed-in-the-wool machine Republicans.

The rumpus among the Republican heelers — following so slight a cause as the action of five or six citizens who took the field with a ticket of their own — resembled the

action of a geyser when a cake of soap is thrown into it — rumbling — followed by terrific vomiting.

A little practical discipline among the reformers is all that is required to make them formidable, — the discipline of experience, of acting together, of personal trust. This is to be acquired only in the field of action.

It is encouraging to find how small a body of men it takes — even at the present moment — to upset the calculations of the politicians. The force that made the Republicans afraid did not lie in the parcel of men who threw in the soap. It came from the great public. The episode showed that the Republicans were afraid to appeal to the country. They knew that their cabal was almost as much hated as Tammany Hall.

There is always great difficulty in this world as to who shall bell the cat; but conventions of mice do not further the matter. The way to do it is for a parcel of mice to take their political lives in their hands and proceed to do it.

The real meaning of all these movements will not be perceived till their work has been done. As history, the cause and course of them will be so plain that a word will

suffice to explain them. In the light of history it will be clear that the improvement in the personnel of our public life was due to the demands of the public — expressed in citizen's movements. We have already reached a point where neither party dares appeal to the public — as they did ten years ago — on purely party grounds. Roosevelt and Van Wyck both claimed to be men superior to the average partisan. The advance of political thought has already made the dullest man perceive the Machine within his own party, and every day spreads the news that there is only a single machine in all our politics. The destruction of this machine will not be like the destruction of the monasteries by Henry VIII., but it will consist in the substitution of new timber for old in the parties themselves.

Any one who looks for an expulsion of Tammany Hall like the expulsion of the Moors from Spain, will be disappointed. There will always be a Tammany Hall. But it will be run by respectable men, who will look back with wonder and disgust upon this period, and who will give the public an honest administration because the public has demanded it.

II

BETWEEN ELECTIONS

An election is like a flash of lightning at midnight. You get an instantaneous photograph of what every man is doing. You see his real relation toward his government. But an election happens only once a year. Government goes on day and night.

It is hard breaking down the popular fallacy that there is such a thing as "politics," governed by peculiar conditions, which must be understood and respected; that the whole thing is a mystic avocation, run as a trade by high priests and low priests, and is remote from our daily life. Our system of party government has been developed with the aim of keeping the control in the hands of professionals. Technicalities have been multiplied, and the rules of the game have become more and more complex. There exists, consequently, an unformulated belief that the corruption of politics is something by itself. Yet there probably never was a

civilization where the mesh of all powers and interests was so close. It is like the interlocking of roots in a swamp. Such density and cohesion were never seen in any epoch, such a mat and tangle of personalities, where every man is tied up with the fibres of every other. If you take an axe or a saw, and cut a clean piece out of it anywhere, you will maim every member of society. How idle, then, even to think of politics as a subject by itself, or of the corruptions of the times as localized!

Politics gives what the chemists call a "mirror," and shows the ingredients in the average man's composition. But you must take your mind off politics if you want to understand America. You must take up the lives of individuals and follow them out, as they play against each other in counterpoint. As soon as you do this you will not be able to determine where politics begins and where it stops. It is all politics: it is all social intercourse: it is all business. Any square foot of this soil will give you the whole fauna and flora of the land. Where will you put in your wedge of reform? There is not a cranny anywhere. The mass is like crude copper ore that cannot be blasted. It blows out the charge.

We think that political agitation must show political results. This is like trying to alter the shape of a shadow without touching its object. The hope is not only mistaken, it is absurd. The results to be obtained from reform movements cannot show in the political field till they have passed through the social world.

"But, after all, what you want is votes, is it not?" "It would be so encouraging to see virtue win, that everybody would vote for you thereafter. Why don't you manage it somehow?" This sort of talk is the best record of incompetence which corruption has imprinted. Enlighten this class and you have saved the Republic. Why, my friend, you are so lost, you are so much a mere product of tyranny that you do not know what a vote is. True, we want votes, but the votes we want must be cast spontaneously. We do not want them so badly as to buy them. A vote is only important because it is an opinion. Even a dictator cannot force opinions upon his subjects by six months of rule; and yet the complaint is that decency gets few votes after a year of effort by a handful of radicals who are despised by the community. We only enter the field of politics because we can there get

a hearing. The candidates in reform movements are tools. They are like crowbars that break open the mind of the age. They cannot be dodged, concealed, or laughed away. Every one is aroused from his lethargy by seeing a real man walk on the scene, amid all the stage properties and marionettes of conventional politics. "No fair!" the people cry. They do not vote for him, of course, but they talk about the portent with a vigor no mere doctrine could call forth, and the discussion blossoms at a later date into a new public spirit, a new and genuine demand for better things.

It is apparent that between the initial political activity of reformers and their ultimate political accomplishments, there must intervene the real agitation, the part that does the work, which goes on in the brains and souls of individual men, and which can only be observed in social life, in manners and conversation.

Now let us take up the steps by which, in practical life, the reaction is set going. Enter the nearest coterie of radicals and listen to the quarrel. Reformers proverbially disagree, and 'their sects mince themselves almost to atoms.' With us the quarrel always arises over the same point.

"Can we afford, under these particular circumstances, to tell the exact truth?" I have never known a reform movement in which this discussion did not rage from start to finish, nor have I known one where any other point was involved. You are a citizens' committee. The parties offer to give you half a loaf. Well and good. But this is not their main object. They want you to call it a whole loaf. They want to dissipate your agitation by getting you to tell the public that you are satisfied. What they hate is the standard. The war between you and them is a spiritual game of chess. They must get you to say they are right. It is their only means of retaining their power.

Thus the apple of discord falls into the Reform camp. Half its members take the bait. In New York City our politics have been so picturesque, the pleas of the politician so shallow, the lies demanded from the reformers so obvious, that the eternal principles of the situation have been revealed in their elemental simplicity. It is just because the impulse towards better things carries no material content — we do not want any particular thing, but we want an improvement in everything — it is just because

the whole movement is purely moral, that the same questions always arise.

We ought not to grieve over the discussion, over the heart-burn and heated argument that start from a knot of radicals and run through the community, setting men against each other. The quarrel in the executive committee of this reform body is the initiative of much wholesome life. They are no more responsible for it, they can no more avoid it, the community can no more advance to higher standards before they have had it, than a child can skate before it can walk.

The executive committee is discussing the schools. In consequence of a recent agitation, the politicians have put up a candidate who will give new plumbing, even if he does steal the books, and the question is whether the School Association shall indorse this candidate. If it does, he wins. If it does not, both plumbing and books are likely to remain the prey of the other party, and the Lord knows how bad that is. The fight rages in the committee, and some sincere old gentleman is prophesying typhoid.

The practical question is: "Do you want good plumbing, or do you want the truth?" You cannot have both this year. If the

association goes out and tells the public exactly what it knows, it will get itself laughed at, insult the candidate, and elect his opponent. If it tells the truth, it might as well run a candidate of its own as a protest and an advertisement of that truth. It can buy good plumbing with a lie, and the old gentleman thinks it ought to do so. The reformers are going to endorse the candidate, and upon their heads will be visited his theft of the books. They have sold out the little public confidence they held. Had they stood out for another year, under the practical régime which they had already endured for twenty, and had they devoted themselves to augmenting the public interest in the school question, both parties would have offered them plumbing and books to allay the excitement. The parties might, perhaps, have relaxed their grip on the whole school system rather than meet the issue.

But the Association does not understand this. It does not, as yet, clearly know its own mind. All this procedure, this going forward and back, is necessary. The community must pass through these experiences before it discovers that the shortest road to good schools is truth. A few men learn

by each turn of the wheel, and these men tend to consolidate. They become a sort of school of political thought. They see that they do not care a whit more about the schools than they do about the parks; that the school agitation is a handy way to make the citizens take notice of maladministration in all departments; that the parties may be left to reform themselves, and to choose the most telling bid for popular favor; that the parties must do this and will do this, in so far as the public demands it, and will not do it under any other circumstances.

It is the very greatest folly in the world for an agitator to be content with a partial success. It destroys his cause. He fades instantly. You cannot see him. He is become part of the corrupt and contented public. His business is to make others demand good administration. He must never reap, but always sow. Let him leave the reaping to others. There will be many of them, and their material accomplishments will be the same whether he endorses them or not. If by chance some party, some administration gives him one hundred per cent of what he demands, let him acknowledge it handsomely; but he need not thank them. They did it because they had to, or

because their conscience compelled them. In neither case was it done for him.

In other words, reform is an idea that must be taken up as a whole. You do not want any specific thing. You use every issue as a symbol. Let us give up the hope of finding any simpler way out of it. Let us take up the burden at its heaviest end, and acknowledge that nothing but an increase of personal force in every American can change our politics. It is curious that this course, which is the shortest cut to the millennium, should be met with the reproach that it puts off victory. This is entirely due to a defect in the imagination of people who are dealing with an unfamiliar subject. We have to learn its principles. We know that what we really want is all of virtue; but it seems so unreasonable to claim this, that we try to buy it piecemeal,— item, a schoolhouse, item, four parks; and with each gain comes a sacrifice of principle, disintegration, discouragement. Fools, if you had asked for all, you would have had this and more. We are defeated by compromise because, no matter how much we may deceive ourselves into thinking that good government is an aggregate of laws and parks, it is not true. Good government is the

outcome of private virtue, and virtue is one thing, — a unit, a force, a mode of motion. It cannot pass through a non-conductor of casuistry at any point. Compromise is loss: first, because it stops the movement, and kills energy; second, because it encourages the illusion that the wooden schoolhouse is good government. As against this, you have the fact that some hundreds of school children do get housed six months before they would have been housed otherwise. But this is like cashing a draft for a thousand pounds with a dish of oatmeal.

We have, perhaps, followed in the wake of some little Reform movement, and it has left us with an insight into the relation between private opinion and public occurrences. We have really found out two things: first, that in order to have better government, the talk and private intelligence upon which it rests must be going forward all the time; and second, that the individual conscience, intelligence, or private will is always set free by the same process, — to wit, by the telling of truth. The identity between public and private life reveals itself the instant a man adopts the plan of indiscriminate truthtelling. He unmasks batteries and discloses wires at every dinner-party; he sees

practical politics in every law office, and social influence in every convention; and wherever he is, he suddenly finds himself, by his own will or against it, a centre of forces. Let him blurt out his opinion. Instantly there follows a little flash of reality. The shams drop, and the lines of human influence, the vital currents of energy, are disclosed. The only difference between a reform movement, so-called, and the private act of any man who desires to better conditions, is that the private man sets one drawing-room in a ferment by speaking his mind or by cutting his friend, and the agitator sets ten thousand in a ferment by attacking the age.

As a practical matter, the conduct of politics depends upon the dinner-table talk of men who are not in politics at all. Government is carried on from moment to moment by the people. The executive is a mere hand and arm. For instance, there is a public excitement about Civil Service Reform. A law is passed and is being evaded. If the governor is to set it up again, he must be sustained by the public. They must follow and understand the situation or the official is helpless. But do we sustain him? We do not. We are half-hearted.

To lend power to his hand we shall have to be strong men. If we now stood ready to denounce him for himself falling short by the breadth of a hair of his whole duty, our support, when we gave it, would be worth having. But we are starchless, and deserve a starchless service.

What did you find out at the last meeting of the Library Committee? You found out that Commissioner Hopkins's nephew was in the piano business; hence the commissioner's views on the music question. Repeat it to the first man you meet in the street, and bring it up at the next meeting of the committee. You did not think you had much influence in town politics, and hardly knew how to step in. Yet the town seems to have no time for any other subject than your attack on the commissioner. From this point on you begin to understand conditions. Every man in town reveals his real character, and his real relation to the town wickedness and to the universe by the way he treats you. You are beginning to get near to something real and something interesting. There is no one in the United States, no matter how small a town he lives in, or how inconspicuous he or she is, who does not have three invitations a week to

enter practical politics by such a door as this. It makes no difference whether he regard himself as a scientific man studying phenomena, or a saint purifying society; he will become both. There is no way to study sociology but this. The books give no hint of what the science is like. They are written by men who do not know the world, but who go about gleaning information instead of trying experiments.

The first discovery we make is that the worst enemy of good government is not our ignorant foreign voter, but our educated domestic railroad president, our prominent business man, our leading lawyer. If there is any truth in the optimistic belief that our standards are now going up, we shall soon see proofs of it in our homes. We shall not note our increase of virtue so much by seeing more crooks in Sing Sing, as by seeing fewer of them in the drawing-rooms. You can acquire more knowledge of American politics by attacking, in open talk, a political lawyer of social standing, than you can in a year of study. These backstair men are in every Bar Association and every Reform Club. They are the agents who supervise the details of corruption. They run between the capitalist, the boss, and the public offi-

cial. They know as fact what every one else knows as inference. They are the priestly class of commerce, and correspond to the intriguing ecclesiastics in periods of church ascendency. Some want money, some office, some mere power, others want social prominence; and their art is to play off interest against interest and advance themselves.

As the president of a social club I have a power that I can use against my party boss or for him. If he can count upon me to serve him at need, it is a gain to him to have me establish myself as a reformer. The most dependable of these confidence men (for they betray nobody, and are universally used and trusted) can amass money and stand in the forefront of social life; and now and then one of them is made an archbishop or a foreign minister. They are, indeed, the figure-heads of the age, the essence of all the wickedness and degradation of our times. So long as such men enjoy public confidence we shall remain as we are. They must be deposed in the public mind.

And yet these gentlemen are the weakest point in the serried ranks of iniquity. They are weak because they have social ambition,

and the place to reach them is in their clubs. They are the best possible object lessons, because everybody knows them. Social punishment is the one cruel reality, the one terrible weapon, the one judgment against which lawyers cannot protect a man. It is as silent as theft, and it raises the cry of "Stop thief!" like a burglar alarm.

The general cowardice of this age covers itself with the illusion of charity, and asks, in the name of Christ, that no one's feelings be hurt. But there is not in the New Testament any hint that hypocrites are to be treated with charity. This class is so intrenched on all sides that the enthusiasts cannot touch them. Their elbows are interlocked; they sit cheek by jowl with virtue. They are rich; they possess the earth. How shall we strike them? Very easily. They are so soft with feeding on politic lies that they drop dead if you give them a dose of ridicule in a drawing-room. Denunciation is well enough, but laughter is the true ratsbane for hypocrites. If you set off a few jests, the air is changed. The men themselves cannot laugh or be laughed at; for nature's revenge has given them masks for faces. You may see a whole room full of them crack with pain because they can-

not laugh. They are angry, and do not speak.

Everybody in America is soft, and hates conflict. The cure for this, both in politics and social life, is the same, — hardihood. Give them raw truth. They think they will die. Their friends call you a murderer. Four thousand ladies and eighty bank directors brought vinegar and brown paper to Low when he was attacked, and Roosevelt posed as a martyr because it was said, up and down, that he acted the part of a selfish politician. What humbug! How is it that all these things grow on the same root, — fraud, cowardice, formality, sentimentalism, and a lack of humor? Why do people become so solemn when they are making a deal, and so angry when they are defending it? The righteous indignation expended in protecting Roosevelt would have founded a church.

The whole problem of better government is a question of how to get people to stop simpering and saying "After you" to cant. A is an aristocrat. B is a boss. C is a candidate. D is a distiller. E is an excellent citizen. They dine. Gloomy silence would be more respectable than this chipper concern that all shall go well. Is not this

politics? Yes, and the very essence of it. Is not the exposure of it practical reform? How easily the arrow goes in! A does not think you should confound him with B, nor E with C. Each is a reformer when he looks to the right, and a scamp as seen from the left. What is their fault? Collusion. "But A means so well." They all mean well. Let us not confound the gradations of their virtue; but can we call any one an honest man who knowingly consorts with thieves? This they all do. Let us declare it. Their resentment at finding themselves classed together drives the wedge into the clique.

Remember, too, that there is no such thing as abstract truth. You must talk facts, you must name names, you must impute motives. You must say what is in your mind. It is the only means you have of cutting yourself free from the body of this death. Innuendo will not do. Nobody minds innuendo. We live and breathe nothing else. If you are not strong enough to face the issue in private life, do not dream that you can do anything for public affairs. This, of course, means fight, not to-morrow, but now. It is only in the course of conflict that any one can come to under-

stand the system, the habit of thought, the mental condition, out of which all our evils arise. The first difficulty is to see the evils clearly; and when we do see them it is like fighting an atmosphere to contend against them. They are so universal and omnipresent that you have no terms to name them by. You must burn a disinfectant.

We have observed, thus far, that no question is ever involved in practical agitation except truth-telling. So long as a man is trying to tell the truth, his remarks will contain a margin which other people will regard as mystifying and irritating exaggeration. It is this very margin of controversy that does the work The more accurate he is, the less he exaggerates, the more he will excite people. It is only by the true part of what is said that the interest is roused. No explosion follows a lie.

The awaking of the better feelings of the individual man is not only the immediate but the ultimate end of all politics. Nor need we be alarmed at any collateral results. No one has ever succeeded in drawing any valid distinction between positive and negative educational work, except this: that in so far as a man is positive himself, he does positive work. It is necessary to destroy

reputations when they are lies. Peace be to their ashes. But war and fire until they be ashes. This is positive and constructive work. You cannot state your case without using popular illustrations, and in clearing the ground for justice and mercy, some little great man gets shown up as a make-believe. This is constructive work.

It is impossible to do harm to reform, unless you are taking some course that tends to put people to sleep. Strangely enough, the great outcry is made upon occasions when men are refusing to take such a course. This is due to the hypnotism of self-interest. "Don't wake us up!" they cry, "We cannot stand the agony of it;" and the rising energy with which they speak wakes other sleepers. In the early stages of any new idea the only advertising it gets is denunciation. This is so much better than silence, that one may hail it as the dawn. You must speak till you draw blood. The agitators have always understood this. Such men as Wendell Phillips were not extravagant. They were practical men. Their business was to get heard. They used vitriol, but they were dealing with the hide of the rhinoceros.

If you look at the work of the anti-slavery

people by the light of what they were trying to do, you will find that they had a very clear understanding of their task. The reason of some of them canted a little from the strain and stress; but they were so much nearer being right-minded than their contemporaries that we may claim them as respectable human beings. They were the rock on which the old politics split. They were a new force. As soon as they had gathered head enough to affect political issues, they broke every public man at the North by forcing him to take sides. There is not a man of the era whom they did not shatter. Finally their own leaders got into public life, and it was not till then that the new era began. The same thing is happening to-day. It is the function of the reformer to crack up any public man who dodges the issue of corruption, or who tries to ride two horses by remaining a straight party man and shouting reform. This is no one's fault. It is a natural process. It is fate. Some fall on one side of the line, and some on the other. One gets the office, and the next loses it; but oblivion yawns for all of them. There is no cassia that can embalm their deeds; they can do nothing interesting, nothing that it lies in the power

of the human mind to remember. Why is it that Calhoun's Speeches are unreadable? He had the earnestness of a prophet and the strength almost of a Titan; but he was engaged in framing a philosophy to protect an interest. He was maintaining something that was not true. It was a fallacy. It was a pretence. It was a house built on the sands of temporary conditions. Such are the ideas of those middling good men, who profess honesty in just that degree which will keep them in office. Honesty beyond this point is, in their philosophy, incompatible with earthly conditions. These men must exist at present. They are an organic product of the times; they are samples of mediocrity. But they have nothing to offer to the curiosity of the next generation. No, not though their talent was employed in protecting an Empire — as it is now employed in eking out the supremacy of a disease in a country whose deeper health is beginning to throw the poison off.

Our public men are confronted with two systems of politics. They cannot hedge. If the question were suddenly to be lost in a riot, no doubt a good administrator might win applause, even a Tammany chief. But we have no riots. We have finished the war

with Spain, and, unless foreign complications shall set in, we are about to sit down with the politicians over our domestic issue — theft. Are you for theft or against it? You can't be both; and your conversation, the views you hold and express to your friends, are the test. It is only because politics affect or reflect these views that politics have any importance at all. Your agents — Croker, Hanna — are serving you faithfully now. Nothing else is to be heard at the clubs but the sound of little hammers riveting abuse.

There is another side to this shield that calls not for scorn but for pity. Have you ever been in need of money? Almost every man who enters our society joins it as a young man in need of money. His instincts are unsullied, his intellect is fresh and strong, but he must live. How comes it that the country is full of maimed human beings, of cynics and feeble good men, and outside of this no form of life except the diabolical intelligence of pure business?

How to make yourself needed, — it is the sycophant's problem; and why should we expect a young American to act differently from a young Spaniard at the Court of

Philip the Second? He must get on. He goes into a law office, and if he is offended at its dishonest practices he cannot speak. He soon accepts them. Thereafter he cannot see them. He goes into a newspaper office, the same; a banker's, a merchant's, a dry-goods' shop. What has happened to these fellows at the end of three years, that their minds seem to be drying up? I have seen many men I knew in college grow more and more uninteresting from year to year. Is there something in trade that desiccates and flattens out, that turns men into dried leaves at the age of forty? Certainly there is. It is not due to trade, but to intensity of self-seeking, combined with narrowness of occupation. If I had to make my way at the court of Queen Elizabeth, I should need more kinds of wits and more knowledge of human nature than in the New York button trade. No doubt I should be a preoccupied, cringing, and odious sort of person at a feudal festivity; but I should be a fascinating man of genius compared to John H. Painter, who at the age of thirty is making $15,000 a year by keeping his mouth shut and attending to business. Put a pressure gauge into Painter, and measure the business tension at New York in 1900. He is

passing his youth in a trance over a game of skill, and thereby earning the respect and admiration of all men. Do not blame him. The great current of business force that passes through the port of New York has touched him, and he is rigid. There are hundreds of these fellows, and they make us think of the well-meaning young man who has to support his family, and who must compete against them for the confidence of his business patrons. Our standard of commercial honesty is set by that current. It is entirely the result of the competition that comes from everybody's wanting to do the same thing.

"But," you say, "we are here dealing with a natural force. If you like, it withers character, and preoccupies one part of a man for so long that the rest of him becomes numb. He is hard and queer. He cannot write because he cannot think; he cannot draw because he cannot think; he cannot enter real politics because he cannot think. He is all the wretch you depict him, but we must have him. Such are men." This is the biggest folly in the world, and shows as deep an intellectual injury in the mind that thinks it as self-seeking can inflict. Business has destroyed the very

knowledge in us of all other natural forces except business.

What shall we do to diminish this awful pressure that makes politics a hell, and wrings out our manhood, till (you will find) the Americans condone the death of their brothers and fathers who perished in home camps during the Spanish war, because it all happened in the cause of trade, it was business thrift, done by smart men in pursuance of self-interest? You ask what you can do to diminish the tension of selfishness, which is as cruel as superstition, and which is not in one place, but everywhere in the United States. It runs a hot iron over young intellect, and crushes character in the bud. It is blindness, palsy, and hip disease. You can hardly find a man who has not got some form of it. There is no newspaper which does not show signs of it. You can hardly find a man who does not proclaim it to be the elixir of life, the vade-mecum of civilization. What can you do? Why, you can oppose it with other natural forces.

You yourself cannot turn Niagara; but there is not a town in America where one single man cannot make his force felt against the whole torrent. He takes a stand on a practical matter. He takes action against

some abuse. What does this accomplish? Everything. How many people are there in your town? Well, every one of them gets a thrill that strikes deeper than any sermon he ever heard. He may howl, but he hears. The grocer's boy, for the first time in his life, believes that the whole outfit of morality has any place in the practical world. Every class contributes its comment. Next year a new element comes forward in politics, as if the franchise had been extended. Remember this: you cannot, though you owned the world, do any good in it except by devising new ways of manifesting the fact that you felt in a particular way. It is the personal influence of example that is the power. Nothing else counts. You can do harm by other methods, but not good. This influence is a natural force, and works like steam power. Why all this commotion over your protest? If you accuse the mayor of being a thief, why does he not reply, in the words of modern philosophy, "Of course I'm a thief, I'm made that way"? Instead of that he resents it, and there ensues a discussion that takes people's attention off of trade, and qualifies the atmosphere of the place. You have appreciably relieved the tension and checked the plague.

This whole subject must be looked at as a crusade in the cause of humanity. You are making it easier for every young man in town to earn his livelihood without paying out his soul and conscience. You cannot help any one man. You are forced into helping them all at once. Every time a man asserts himself he cuts a cord that is strangling somebody. The first time that independent candidates for local office were run in New York City, strong men cried in the street for rage. The supremacy of commerce had been affronted. New York, in all that makes life worth living, is a new city since the reform movements began to break up the torpor of serfdom.

You asked how to fight force. It must be fought with force, and not with arguments. Indeed, it is easier to start a reform and carry it through, than it is to explain either why or how it is done. You can only understand this after you have been three times ridiculed as a reformer; and then you will begin to see that throughout the community, running through every one, there are currents of beneficent power that accomplish changes, sometimes visible, sometimes hard to see; that this power is in its nature quite as strong, quite as real and reliable, as that Wall Street current, — terrible forces both

of them, forever operative and struggling and contending together as they surge and swell through the people. It is the sight of that power for good that you need. I cannot give it to you. You must sink your own shaft for it. It is this beneficent current passing from man to man that makes the unity of all efforts for public betterment. You have a movement and an excitement over bad water, and it leaves you with kindergartens in your schools. It is this current that turns your remark at the club (which every one repeated in order to injure you) into a piece of encouragement to the banker's clerk, who could not have made it himself except at the cost of his livelihood. It is this current — not only the fear of it, but the presence of it — in the heart of your merchants that leaves them at your mercy. Cast anything into this current and it goes everywhere, like aniline dye put into a reservoir; it tinges the whole local life in twenty-four hours. It is to this current that all appeals are made. All party platforms, all resolutions, all lies are dedicated to it; all literature lives by it. The head of power is near and easy if you strike directly for it.

There is an opinion abroad that good politics requires that every man should give his

whole time to politics. This is another of the superstitions disseminated by the politicians who want us to go to their primaries, and accepted by people so ignorant of life that they believe that the temperature depends upon the thermometer.

Why, you are running those primaries now. If you were different, they would become different. You need never go near them. Go into that camp where your instinct leads you. The improvement in politics will not be marked by any cyclonic overturn. There will always be two parties competing for your vote. It takes no more time to vote for a good man than for a bad man. There will be no more men in public life then than now. There will be no overt change in conditions. A few leaders will stand for the new forces. It is true that it requires a general increase of interest on the part of every one, in order that these men shall be found. Your personal duty is to support them in private and public. That is all. The extent to which you yourself become involved in public affairs depends upon chances with which you need not concern yourself. Only try to understand what is happening under your eyes. Every time you see a group of men advancing some cause that seems sensible, and being de-

nounced on all hands as "self-appointed," see if it was not something in yourself, after all, that appointed those men.

As we grow old, what have we to rely on as a touchstone for the times? You once had your own causes and enthusiasms, but you cannot understand these new ones. You had your certificate from the Almighty, but these fellows are "self-appointed." What you wanted was clear, but these men want something unattainable, something that society, as you know it, cannot supply. Calm yourself, my friend; perhaps they bring it.

Has the great Philosophy of Evolution done nothing for the mind of man, that new developments, as they arrive, are received with the same stony solemnity, are greeted with the same phrases as ever? How can you have the ingenuousness to argue soberly against me, supplying me, by every word you say, with new illustrations, new hope, new fuel? Until I heard you repeat word by word the prayer-book of crumbling conservatism, I was not sure I was right. You have placed the great seal of the world upon new truth. Thus should it be received.

The radicals are really always saying the same thing. They do not change; everybody else changes. They are accused of the most

incompatible crimes, of egoism and a mania for power, indifference to the fate of their own cause, fanaticism, triviality, want of humor, buffoonery and irreverence. But they sound a certain note. Hence the great practical power of consistent radicals. To all appearance nobody follows them, yet every one believes them. They hold a tuning-fork and sound A, and everybody knows it really is A, though the time-honored pitch is G flat. The community cannot get that A out of its head. Nothing can prevent an upward tendency in the popular tone so long as the real A is kept sounding. Every now and then the whole town strikes it for a week, and all the bells ring, and then all sinks to suppressed discord and denial.

The reason why we have not, of late years, had strong consistent centres of influence, focuses of steady political power, has been that the community has not developed men who could hold the note. It was only when the note made a temporary concord with some heavy political scheme that the reform leaders could hear it themselves. For the rest of the time it threw the whole civilization out of tune. The terrible clash of interests drowned it. The reformers themselves lost it, and wandered up and down, guessing.

It is imagined that nature goes by jumps, and that a whole community can suddenly sing in tune, after it has been caterwauling and murdering the scale for twenty years. The truth is, we ought to thank God when any man or body of men make the discovery that there is such a thing as absolute pitch, or absolute honesty, or absolute personal and intellectual integrity. A few years of this spirit will identify certain men with the fundamental idea that truth is stronger than consequences, and these men will become the most serious force and the only truly political force in their community. Their ambition is illimitable, for you cannot set bounds to personal influence. But it is an ambition that cannot be abused. A departure from their own course will ruin any one of them in a night, and undo twenty years of service.

It would be natural that such sets of men should arise all over the country, men who "wanted" nothing, and should reveal the inverse position of the Boss System; a set of moral bosses with no organizations, no politics; men thrown into prominence by the operation of all the forces of human nature now suppressed, and the suppression of those now operative. It is obvious that one such man will suffice for a town. In the competition of

character, one man will be naturally fixed upon, whom his competitors will be the first to honor; and upon him will be condensed the public feeling, the confidence of the community. If the extreme case do not arise, nevertheless it is certain that the tendencies toward a destruction of the present system, will reveal themselves as a tendency making for the weight of personal character in practical politics.

Reform politics is, after all, a simple thing. It demands no great attainments. You can play the game in the dark. A child can understand it. There are no subtleties nor obscurities, no higher analysis or mystery of any sort. If you want a compass at any moment in the midst of some difficult situation, you have only to say to yourself, "Life is larger than this little imbroglio. I shall follow my instinct." As you say this, your compass swings true. You may be surprised to find what course it points to. But what it tells you to do will be practical agitation.

III

THE MASSES

LET us examine current beliefs on popular education, and then thereafter let us look very closely at the work done among the poor, and see upon what lines it has been found possible to establish influence.

Why is it that if you go down to the Bowery and set up a kindergarten or give a course of lectures on the Duties of Citizenship, every one commends you; whereas if you go into some abandoned district where a Tammany thug is running for the State Assembly against a Republican heeler, and if you put an honest man in the field against them both, your friends call you a fool, and say that your reform consists of mere negation?

Who asks to see the results upon the public welfare of a night school in astronomy? Yet, if you get ten mechanics to labor for six months with the fire of enthusiasm in them, building up a radical club, and as a result, one hundred and fifty men cast for the first

time in their lives a vote that represents the heart and conscience of each, your intelligent friends ask, "What have you done? You are howling against the moon."

Why is it that if you are a grocer and refuse to sand your sugar, you are called honest? Yet, if a young politician takes this course, it is supposed that life is not long enough for the world to discover his value; he is a visionary. In the sugar trade the man insisted upon dealing with the community as a whole. He was not trying to sell sugar to a club, or to benefit some district. He dealt with the public. Now, if a politician deals directly with the public, we condemn him because we cannot see the empire of confidence he is building up. The reason we do not see it is entirely due to historical causes. We have had little experience recently in the utility of large appeals. We forget their power. Yet we are not without examples. Grover Cleveland dealt directly with the people on a great scale. He established a personal relation that was stronger than party bonds. This made him President, preserved his character and gave reality to politics. It was a bit of education to every man in the United States to see what riff-raff our political arks were made of: a man laid his hand

on the end of one of them and tore off the roof.

We are rather more familiar with the power of public confidence as seen in times of revolution. In the year of the Lexow investigation the people of New York City believed that Dr. Parkhurst and John Goff were in earnest. There was a period of a few weeks when Goff exercised the powers of a dictator. The Police Commissioners had threatened to discipline a subordinate who had testified before Goff's committee. He subpœnaed them all the next morning, and he browbeat them like school-boys. They went back humbled. The revelations of the summer had awakened the spirit of revolt in the masses of the people, and it expressed itself directly as power. The machinery of government was not in abeyance, but it was seen to be a mere vehicle. It could be made to work justice. Here were two men, Goff and Parkhurst, rendered all-powerful by the existence of popular confidence. The state of mind of the community was unusual, and the indignation soon subsided; but it subsided to a new level, and the abuses and inhumanity of Boss tyranny have never since been so severe in New York.

Our people have seen several volcanic eruptions of this sort, and therefore they

believe in them. They believe in the moral power of the community, but are afraid it can only act by convulsion. They think that some new principle comes into play at such times, something which is not a constant factor in daily government. On the other hand, we have all been trained to respect plodding methods in common education, and we know that much can be done by kindergartens, boys' clubs, and propaganda to change the standards of the community and make men trust virtue. We believe in the boys' club, and we believe in the earthquake; we forget that the same principle underlies them both. When some one applies this principle to the field of political education that lies between them, we are cynical because we have no experience.

Apart from the lack of experience that prevents people from seeing the use of this practical activity, there are two distressing elements that make men not want to see it. In the first place, even if you work in the Bowery and a friend votes in Harlem, you are apt to be hitting his interests and prejudices. And in the second place your conduct is a horrid appeal. If this work is useful, he ought to be doing it. He had hoped that nothing could be done.

The real distinction between this particular sort of work and other philanthropy is, that other philanthropy is preparatory drill; this is war. The other is feeding, training, and preaching; this is practice. Now, you may have your license to preach all you please in the vineyard, but if you touch the soil with the spade, you find the ground is pre-empted; you are fighting a railroad. And this condition is openly recognized in cities where the evil forces are completely dominant.

In lecturing before the University Extension in Pennsylvania, you are not allowed to talk politics. It is against the policy of the philanthropists who run the institution, and who are run by the railroad. The situation in Philadelphia is merely illustrative of the distinction between philanthropy and political reform, which is always ready to become apparent. Of course, so long as the railroad distributes the philanthropy, there will result nothing but tyranny. The Roman Emperors gave shows to amuse the people, and we give them talks on Botticelli and magic-lantern pictures of the Nile. There are, then, real reasons why our people are slow to acknowledge the utility of militant political reform, and why they clutch at any handle against it.

But we have much more to learn from the philanthropists by a study of what they have done than by dwelling on their shortcomings. They have labored while the political reformers have slept; and after many trials and many failures they have found certain working principles.

It was they who discovered that we cannot, as human nature is constituted, give strength to any one except by helping the whole man to develop at once. We must give him a chance to grow. The workers among the poor have long ago seen the futility of any effort except that of raising the general standards of living. They have established Settlements, where the relation between the settlers and the surrounding population is as natural as family life and as perennial as Tammany Hall. After ten years of experiment this has been done in many places. If you will go to one of these places and study exactly what has happened in the line of benefit to the people, you will see that it has resulted *wholly* from personal influence, — that is to say, from the effect of character upon character. "Two years ago we established a boys' club, and soon afterwards a kindergarten. The boys returned one day, and out of jealousy smashed everything belonging to the kinder-

garten, and piled the rubbish in the middle of the room. Last week a barrel of fruit was sent here for the sick and weakly, and we left the barrel open with a card on the outside to that effect. You could not get the boys to touch the fruit. Now, if you ask me what system or what part of the system has caused the change in these boys, I don't know."

This is reform politics, but unless you and I go there and make a place for these boys in practical politics, they will find waiting for them nothing but the caucus and the job. They will relapse and forget. It is throwing effort into the sea to train the young if you stop there. The test comes when the scaffoldings of early life are taken down. Each man meets the world alone. The tragedies of character occur at this period. We must make a camp and standing ground for grown men. So far as the hope of political purity goes, there are acres of this city that are in a worse condition than health was in before the era of hospitals. Fly over them as the crow flies, and you cannot find a centre of downright antagonism to evil. The population does not know that such a thing exists; and yet, if you propose to go there and set up a fight against both parties, — that is to say, a fight

against wickedness, — you are told by patriots and doctors of divinity, "Don't do it unless you can win. You will disgust people with reform."

It is awful and at the same time ludicrous to hear an educated person maintain this doctrine and in the same breath mourn over the corruption of the masses. The man throws his own dark shadow over them and bewails their want of light. He doubts the power of personal influence; and yet there is absolutely no other force for good in the world, and never has been. Let us stick to facts. Take individual cases of improvement and see what power has been at work. You will find that you disclose behind any personal improvement, not a ballot law or an organization, but a human being.

The movement for political reform goes into the Bowery in the wake of the philanthropists. We go there knowing something about practical politics. We know, for instance, that the Bowery is the geographical name for a district which is really governed by the same forces as Fifth Avenue. To think that the politics of the Bowery are controlled by the Bowery is about as sensible as to believe that the politics of Irkutsk are controlled at Irkutsk. We have got, first, to dis-

close the machinery of evil and then to fight it wherever we find it, even though it lead us into churches. Nothing is needed in any Tammany club on the Bowery that is not needed ten times as much in the Union League Club on Fifth Avenue — personal self-sacrifice for principle in a cause which is apparently hopeless. Unless you go there displaying that, you are not needed.

Our intercourse with the laboring man is a great teacher to ourselves. That is its main use. It brings out, as nothing else can, the magnitude and perfection of the system, whose visible top and little flag we can always see, but whose dimensions and ramifications nothing but experiment can reveal; philosophy could not guess it.

Here is a laborer on the street railroad. In order to get work he must show a ticket from the party boss. It is his passport from the Czar, countersigned by the proper official; otherwise he gets no job. Here is a young notary whom you employ to carry about the certificate that puts an independent candidate in nomination. You try to get him to sign the thing himself and join your club. It is no use asking. His brother did it once and lost his place; so close is the scrutiny, so rapid the punishment. Examine the retail

grocer, or the tobacconist, or the cobbler; go into particulars with him, and you will find that his unwillingness to join your movement does not spring so directly from his inability to see the point of it, as from fear of the direct and immediate consequences to himself.

We wanted to elevate the masses, but it turns out, as the philanthropists discerned long ago, that there are no masses in America, there are no masses in New York City. We can discover only individuals, who are each controlled by individual interests, by various and subtle considerations. These men are in chains to other men, who often live in other parts of the city.

The attorneys and merchants, the business world in fact, is found to be in league with abuse. The man who signs the laborer's license to work reports twice a day to a big contractor who is director in a bank whose president owns the opera house and endowed the sailors' home. He built the yacht club, is vestryman in the biggest church, and is revered by all men. The title-deeds and registry books of all visible wealth, show the names of his intimate friends. All we can do in the way of weakening the chains is to expose them; this cruelty is largely ignorance. The beneficiaries must be made to see the

sources of their wealth. It is pre-occupation with business, not coldness of heart, that conceals the conditions. The American business man is a warm-hearted being. He does not even care for money, but for the game of business.

As matters now stand in America, we see this condition, — that it is for the immediate interest of the dominant class, namely, the politico-financial class, to keep the people as selfish as possible. We have examined the subtle strains of influence and prejudice by which this commercial interest has been extended, until, as a practical matter, it is almost impossible for a man to get word to the laboring classes that there exists such a thing as political morality. Some professional philanthropist always stands ready to prevent the signal of honesty from being raised; some set of Sunday citizens interposes to stop the unwise, inexpedient, foolhardy attempt to be independent of rascality.

And when you do succeed in reaching the mechanic, what can you do for him? Tell him to be a man, and strike off the shackles that bind him.

Here we are, as helpless before the poor as before the rich, facing both of them with the same query, "Can you not see that your own

concession, call it poverty, or call it poverty of will, is one element of this oppression?"

The difference between the poor and the financial classes is one of spiritual complexity. The promoters are well-to-do because their minds have been able to grasp and utilize the complex forces made up of the minds of their simpler fellow-beings. And this astuteness leaves them less open to unselfish emotions than the laboring man. His nature is more intact. He is a more emotional and instinctive being. It is for this reason that moral reforms have come from the lower strata of society. The people have as much to lose as the bankers, but they are more ready to lose it.

The head of moral feeling in the community has got to grow strong enough to force the financier to take his clutch off the laboring man, before you can reach the laboring man. And yet labor itself will contribute more than its share towards this head of moral feeling; and therefore you must go among the laboring classes with your ideas and your propaganda. But beware lest you give him a stone for bread. You can do no more for a man because you call yourself a "politician" than if you were a mere philanthropist. A man's standards of political thought are but

a small fraction of his general standards, and unless your sense of truth is as sharp as a sword you had better not come near the laboring man.

The point here made is — and it is of great importance — that we candidly acknowledge at every instant the nature of our undertaking and the nature of our power, for in so far as we mistake them we weaken our practical utility.

It is not as the agent of any institution that you are here, but as the agent of conscience at the dictation of personal feeling. Do you need proof that you yourself draw all your power from sheer moral influence? Note what you do when you start your club. You go to the nearest well-to-do person and ask for money for rent. He gives it to you out of his fund of general benevolence. To whom do you really want to distribute this benevolence? To every one. You feel that by passing it on through a group and series of boys and young men you can benefit the whole country. You use them as a mere vehicle. You know that you can only help them by getting them to help others. Your appeal for clients then goes out to the whole district. Your club puts you in communication with every man in it. In teaching your

club or in exhorting any mortal to good behavior, what method, what stimulus, do you use? Whether you know it or not, you are really drawing support from every one who is following the same principle, all over the city, all over the country, all over the world. Do you not ceaselessly appeal to the examples of Washington and Lincoln, to the books and conduct of men whose aims were your aims? Or take your own case. Why do you occupy yourself with this thing? This activity satisfies your demands upon life; nothing else does. You are the creature of a thousand influences, and if you begin to trace them you find that you are fulfilling the will of Toynbee, of John Stuart Mill, of Kant. You are a disciple of Tolstoi. You were inspired by William Lloyd Garrison. It is they, as much as you, who are doing this work. It is they who formulated the ideas and impressed them upon you. Your great friends are the founders of religions. Examine the actual persons who give you practical help. You will find Moses, you will find Christ behind them. What you are using is the world's fund of unselfishness. It is necessary to employ the whole of it in order to accomplish anything, however small. As a practical matter, every one does employ

the whole of it every time he even thinks of reform.

Now, just as we can trace the sources of our power in the great currents of human feeling that flow down to us out of the past; so we can foresee the accomplishments of that power in enlarging the lives of men who come after us. We are sinking the foundations of a new politics. You cannot always see every stone, but it has gone to its place. It is impossible to take a stand for what you think is a true theory without thereby becoming an integral factor for good in every man who hears of it. It is impossible to be that factor without taking that stand.

What is the nature of the good you can do to the laboring man? His mind analyzes you in a flash. If he is influenced by you, you may be sure that it is by something in you that you had not intended to give him. After the man has seen you, he has been moved by you; but how? Consult your own remembrance. What incident of character impressed you most when you were a child? Do you remember any act, any expression or gesture or anecdote or speech, that had a lasting influence upon you? Now I ask you this: Was it done for you? Were you the designed beneficiary of it? Was it not rather

the silent part of some one else's conduct, a thing you were perhaps not meant to see at all? And this was no accident. This is the natural history of influence; it passes unconsciously from life to life.

We must take the world as we find it. We must deal with human nature according to the laws of human nature. Our politics are at present so artificial that the average man thinks that the name "politics" prevents the well established and familiar principles of human nature from being operative. But he is wrong. Man has never yet succeeded in inventing any system that could evade them or affect them in the least. All the political organization of reform is already in existence, and needs only strengthening and developing. It is all in use, and every one understands its use and knows its headquarters and its agencies. It is all individual character and courage, and with the growth of character and courage it will become more defined and visible every day.

IV

LITERATURE

THERE are feelings and views about life, there are conviction and insight, which come from thinking at a high rate of speed, and vanish when the machinery moves slowly and the blood ebbs. The world not only accepts the intensity of the writer, but demands it. Nevertheless, the world has an imperfect knowledge as to where this intensity comes from, how it is produced, or what relation it bears to ugliness and falsehood. "What a pleasure it must be to you," said Rothschild to Heine, "to be able to turn off those little songs!"

In our ordinary moods we regard the conclusions of the poets as both true and untrue, — true to feeling, untrue to fact; true as intimations of the next world or of some lost world; untrue here, because detached from those portions of society that are perennially visible. Most men have a duplicate philosophy which enables them to love the

arts and the wit of mankind, at the same time that they conveniently despise them. Life is ugly and necessary; art is beautiful and impossible. "The farther you go from the facts of life, the nearer you get to poetry. The practical problem is to keep them in separate spheres, and to enjoy both." The hypothesis of a duplicity in the universe explains everything, and staves off all claims and questionings.

Such are the convictions of the average cultivated man. His back is broken, but he lives in the two halves comfortably enough. He has to be protected at his weak spot, of course, and that spot is the present; ten years from now, to-morrow, yesterday, the day of judgment, the State of Pennsylvania, — all these you are welcome to. Every form of idealism appeals to him, so long as it does not ask him to budge out of his armchair. "Aha," he says, "I understand this. It takes its place in the realm of the Imagination."

This man does not know, and has no means of knowing, that good books are only written by men whose backs are not broken, and whose vital energy circulates through their entire system in one sweep. They have a unitary and not a duplicate philosophy.

The present is their strong point. The actualities of life are their passion. They lay a bold hand upon everything within their reach, for they see it with new sight.

The glitter of the past makes us think of literature as embodied in books; but to understand literature we must fix our minds on authors, not on books. The men who write — what makes them write well or ill? What are the conditions that breed poetry, or music, or architecture? The current beliefs about art and letters are fatalistic. It is supposed that poets and artists crop up now and then, and that nothing can stop them; they need no aid, they conquer circumstances. I do not believe it. We see no analogy to it in nature. Among the plants and the fishes we see nothing but a wholesale and incredible destruction of germs on all sides. It seems a miracle that any seed should fall upon good ground, and be sheltered till it come to the flower. Why should the percentage of germs that come to maturity be greater with genius than it is with the eggs of the sturgeon? The enemies of each are numerous. If it were not for the fecundity of nature, we should have none of either of them. And how is it that the great man always happens to be young

at the very moment when some events are going forward that ripen his powers; so that he grows up with his time, and does something that is comprehensible to all time?

The answer is, that all eras are sown thick with the seeds of genius, which for the most part die, but in a favoring age mature to greatness. Must we resort to a theory of special creation to explain the great talents of the world? And even this would not explain our own welcome and our own comprehension of them when they come. If it were not for the undeveloped powers, the seeds of genius, in ourselves, Plato and Bach would be meaningless, and Christ would have died in vain.

It must be that thousands of good intellects perish annually. The men do not die, but their powers wither, or rather never mature. Art, like everything else, represents an escape, a survival. In any age that lacks it, or is weak in it, we may look about for the enginery by which it is crushed. In looking into a past age we are put to inference and conjecture. We see the mark of fetters upon the Byzantine soul, and we begin dredging the dark waters of history for a metaphysical cause. We cannot walk into a Byzantine shop and watch the appren-

tice at work. But in our own time we can see the whole process in action. We can study our modern Inquisitions at leisure, and note every mark that is made upon a soul that is passing through them.

It does not involve any indignity to the pretensions of literature if we walk into that great bazaar, modern journalism, and see what is going on there behind the counters. Here is a factory of popular art. It is not the whole of letters; but it has an influence on the whole of letters. The press fills the consciousness of the people. A modern community breathes through its press. Journalism, to be sure, is a region of letters, where all the factors for truth are at a special and peculiar discount. Its attention is given to near and ugly things, to mean quarrels, business interests, and special ends. Every country shows up badly here. The hypocrisy of the press is the worst thing in England. It is the worst exhibition of England's worst fault. The press of France gives you France at her weakest. The press of America gives you America at her cheapest. Perhaps the study of journalism in any country would illustrate the peculiar vices of that country; and it is fair to remember this in examining our

own press. But examine it we must, for it is important.

The subject includes more than the daily newspapers. Those ephemeral sheets that flutter from the table into the waste-paper basket, which are something more than mere newspapers and less than magazines, and the magazines themselves, which are more than budgets of gossip and less than books, make up a perpetual rain of paper and ink. Thousands of people are engaged in writing them, and millions in reading them. This whole species of literature is typical of the age; let us see how it is conducted.

A journal is a meeting-place between the forces of intellect and of commerce. The men who become editors always bear some relation to the intellectual interests of the country. They make money, but they make it by understanding the minds of people who are not taking money, but thought, from the exchanges that the editors set up. A magazine or a newspaper is a shop. Each is an experiment and represents a new focus, a new ratio between commerce and intellect. Even trade journals have columns devoted to general information and jokes. The one thing a journal must have in order to be a journal is circulation. It must be carried

into people's houses, and this is brought about by an impulse in the buyer. The buyer has many opinions and modes of thought that he does not draw from the journal, and he is always ready to drop a journal that offends him. An editor is thus constantly forced to choose between affronting his public and placating his public. Now, whatever arguments may be given for his taking one course or the other, it remains clear that in so far as an editor is not publishing what he himself thinks of interest for its own sake, he is encouraging in the public something else besides intellect. He is subserving financial, political, or religious bias, or, it may be, popular whim. He is, to this extent at least, the custodian and protector of prejudice.

The thrift of an editor-owner, who is building up the circulation of a paper, tends to keep him conservative. Repetition is safer than innovation. An especially strong temptation is spread before the American editor in the shape of an enormous reading public, made up of people who have a common-school education, and who resemble each other very closely in their traits of mind. There is money to be made by any one who discerns a new way of re-

inforcing any prejudice of the American people.

It has come about very naturally during the last thirty years, that journalism has been developed in America as one of the branches in the science of catering to the masses on a gigantic scale. The different kinds of conservatism have been banked, consolidated, and, as it were, marshalled under the banners of as many journals. Money and energy have been expended in collecting these vast audiences, and sleepless vigilance is needed to keep them together.

The great investments in the good will of millions are nursed by editors who live by their talents, and who in another age would have been intellectual men. The highest type of editor now extant in America will as frankly regret his own obligation to cater to mediocrity, as the business man will regret his obligation to pay blackmail, or as the citizen will regret his obligation to vote for one of the parties. "There is nothing else to do. I am dealing with the money of others. There are not enough intelligent people to count." He serves the times. The influence thus exerted by the public (through the editor) upon the writer tends to modify the writer and make him resemble

the public. It is a spiritual pressure exerted by the majority in favor of conformity. This exists in all countries, but is peculiarly severe in countries and ages where the majority is made up of individuals very similar to each other. The tyranny of a uniform population always makes itself felt.

If any man doubt the hide-bound character of our journals to-day, let him try this experiment. Let him write down what he thinks upon any matter, write a story of any length, a poem, a prayer, a speech. Let him assume, as he writes it, that it cannot be published, and let him satisfy his individual taste in the subject, size, mood, and tenor of the whole composition. Then let him begin his peregrinations to find in which one of the ten thousand journals of America there is a place for his ideas as they stand. We have more journals than any other country. The whole field of ideas has been covered; every vehicle of opinion has its policy, its methods, its precedents. A hundred will receive him if he shaves this, pads that, cuts it in half; but not one of them will trust him as he stands, "Good, but eccentric," "Good, but too long," "Good, but new."

Let us follow the steps of this withering influence. A young illustrator does an etching that he likes. He is told to reduce it to the conventional standard. This is easy, but what is happening in the process? He blurs the fine edges of vision, not only on the plate, but in his own mind. The real injury to intellect is not done in the editorial sanctum. It is done in the mind of the writer who himself attempts to cater to the prejudice of others. A man rewrites a scene in a story to please a public. In order to do this he is obliged to forget what his story was about. He is talking by rote; he is making an imitation. Does this seem a small thing? Let any one do it once and see where it leads him. The attitude of the whole human being towards his whole life is changed by the experience. Do it twice, and you can hardly shake off the practice. Write and publish six editorials for the "Universalist," and then sit down to write one not in the style of the "Universalist." You will find it, practically, an impossibility.

The notable lack in our literature is this: the prickles and irregularities of personal feeling have been pumice-stoned away. It is too smooth. There is an absence of individuality, of private opinion. This is

the same lack that curses our politics, — the absence of private opinion.

The sacrifice in political life is honesty, in literary life is intellect; but the closer you examine honesty and intellect the more clearly they appear to be the same thing. Suppose that a judge, in order to please a boss, awards Parson Jones' cow to Deacon Brown; does he boldly admit this even to himself? Never. He writes an able opinion in which he befogs his intelligence, and convinces himself that he has arrived at his award by logical steps. In like manner, the revising editor who reads with the eyes of the farmer's daughter begins to lose his own. He is extinguishing some sparks of instructive reality which would offend — and benefit — the farmer's daughter; and he is obliterating a part of his own mind with every stroke of his blue pencil. He is devitalizing literature by erasing personality. He does this in the money interests of a syndicate; but the debasing effect upon character is the same as if it were done at the dictate of the German Emperor. The harm done in either case is intellectual.

Take another example. A reporter writes up a public meeting, but colors it with the creed of his journal. Can he do this accept-

ably without abjuring his own senses? He is competing with men whose every energy is bent on seeing the occasion as the newspaper wishes it seen. Consider the immense difficulty of telling the truth on the witness stand, and judge whether good reporting is easy. The newspaper trade, as now conducted, is prostitution. It mows down the boys as they come from the colleges. It defaces the very desire for truth, and leaves them without a principle to set a clock by. They grow to disbelieve in the reality of ideas. But these are our future literati, our poets and essayists, our historians and publicists.

The experts who sit in the offices of the journals of the country have so long used their minds as commercial instruments, that it never occurs to them to publish or not publish anything, according to their personal views. They do not know that every time they subserve prejudice they are ruining intellect. If there were an editor who had any suspicion of the way the world is put together, he would respect talent as he respects honor. It would be impossible for him to make his living by this traffic. If he knew what he was doing, he would prefer penury.

These men, then, have not the least idea of the function they fulfil. No more has the agent of the Insurance Company who corrupts a legislature. The difference in degree between the two iniquities is enormous, because one belongs to that region in the scale of morality which is completely understood, and the other does not. We do not excuse the insurance agent; we will not allow him to plead ignorance. He commits a penal offence. We will not allow selfishness to trade upon selfishness and steal from the public in this form. But what law can protect the public interest in the higher faculties? What statute can enforce artistic truth?

We actually forbid a man by statute to sell his vote, because a vote is understood to be an opinion, a thing dependent on rational and moral considerations. You cannot buy and sell it without turning it into something else. The exercise of that infinitesimal fraction of public power represented by one man's vote is hedged about with penalties; because the logic of practical government has forced us to see its importance. But the harm done to a community by the sale of a vote does not follow by virtue of the statute, but by virtue of a law

of influence of which the statute is the recognition. The same law governs the sale of any opinion, whether it be conveyed in a book review or in a political speech, in a picture of life and manners, a poem, a novel, or an etching. There is no department of life in which you can lie for private gain without doing harm. The grosser forms of it give us the key to the subtler ones, and the jail becomes the symbol of that condition into which the violation of truth will shut any mind.

So far as any man comes directly in contact with the agencies of organized literature, let him remember that his mind is at stake. They can change you, but you cannot change them, except by changing the public they reflect. The faculties of man are as strong as steel if properly used, but they are like the down on a peach if improperly used. What shall a man take in exchange for his soul? No man has the privilege upon this earth of being more than one person. In this matter of expression, it is the last ten per cent of accuracy that saves or sells you. Talent evaporates as easily as a delegate holds his tongue or a lawyer smiles to a rich man; and the injury is irremediable. Let a man not alter a line or

cut a paragraph at the suggestion of an editor. Those are the very words that are valuable. "Ah," you say, "but I need criticism." Then go to a critic. Consult the man who is farthest away from this influence, some one who cannot read the magazines, some one who does not have to read them. Your public, when you get one, will qualify the general public; but you must reach it as a whole man. The writer's course is easy compared to that of the reform politician, because printing is cheap. He will get heard immediately. He covers the whole of the United States while the other is canvassing a ward. Literary self-assertion is as much needed as any of the virtue we pray for in politics. A resonant and unvexed independence makes a man's words stir the fibres in other men; and it matters little whether you label his words literature or politics.

The difficulty in any revolt against custom, the struggle a man has in getting his mind free from the cobwebs of restraint, always turns out to involve financial distress; and this holds true of the writer's attempt to override the senseless restrictions of the press. The magazines pay handsomely, and pay at once. A writer must

earn his bread; a man must support his family. We accept this necessity with such a hearty concurrence, and the necessity itself becomes so sacred, that it seems to imply an answer to all ethical and artistic questions. We almost think that nature will connive at malpractice done in so good a cause as the support of a family. The subject must be looked at more narrowly. The spur of poverty is popularly regarded not only as an excuse for all bad work, but as a prerequisite to all good work. There is a misconception in this wholesale appropriation of a partial truth. The economic laws are valuable and suggestive, but they are founded on the belief that a man will pursue his own business interests exclusively. This is never entirely true even in trade, and the doctrines of the economists become more and more misleading when applied to fields of life where the money motive becomes incidental. The law of supply and demand does not govern the production of sonnets.

Let us lay aside theory and observe the effects of want upon the artist and his work. As a stimulus to the whole man, a prod to get him into action and keep him active, the spur of poverty is a blessing. But if it

enter into the detail of his attention, while he is at work, it is damnation.

A man at work is like a string that is vibrating. Touch it with a feather and it is numb. A singer will sing flat if he sees a friend in the audience. Even a trained and cold-blooded lawyer who is trying a case, will not be at his best if he is watched by some one whom he wants to impress.

The artist is the easiest of all men to upset. He is dealing with subtle and fluid things, — memories, allusions, associations. It is all gossamer and sunlight when he begins. It is to be gossamer and sunlight when he is finished. But in the interim it is bricks and mortar, rubble and white lead. And the writer — I do not say that he must be more free from cares than the next man — but he must not let into the mint and forge of his thought some immaterial and petty fact about himself, for this will make him self-conscious. Consider how ingenuous, how unexpected, how natural is good conversation. At one moment you have nothing to say, at the next a vista of ideas has opened. They come crowding in, and the telling of them reveals new vistas. It is the same with the writer. In the process of writing the story is made. There is

really nothing to say or do in the world until you make your start, and then the significance begins to steam out of the materials. And here, in the act and heat of creation, to have the cold fear thrust in, "I cannot use that phrase because the editor will think it too strong," is enough to chill the brain of Rabelais. Human nature cannot stand such handling. Do this to a man and you break his spirit. He becomes tame, calculating, and ingenious. His powers are frozen.

It is impossible not to see in contemporary journalism a slaughter-house for mind. Here we have a great whale that browses on the young and eats them by thousands. This is the seamy side of popular education. The low level of the class at the dame's school keeps the bright boys back and makes dunces of them.

We have been dealing in all this matter with one of the deepest facts of life, to wit, the influence that society at large has in cutting down and narrowing the development of the individual. The newspaper business displays the whole operation very vividly; but we may see the same thing happening in the other walks of life. There arrives a time in the career of most men

when their powers become fixed. Men seem to expand to definite shapes, like those Japanese cuttings that open out into flowers and plants when you drop them into warm water. After reaching his saturation point each man fills his niche in society and changes little. He goes on doing whatever he was engaged upon at the time he touched his limit.

We almost believe that every man has his predestinate size and shape, and that some obscure law of growth arrests one man at thirty and the next at forty years of age. This is partly true; but the law is not obscure. It is not because the men stop growing that they repeat themselves, but they stop growing because they repeat themselves. They cease to experiment; they cease to search. The lawyer adopts routine methods; the painter follows up his success with an imitation of his success; the writer finds a recipe for style or plot. Every one saves himself the trouble of re-examining the contents of his own mind. He has the best possible reason for doing this. The public will not pay for his experiments as well as it will for his routine work. But the laws of nature are deaf to his reasons. Research is the price of intellectual growth.

If you face the problems of life freshly and squarely each morning, you march. If you accept any solution as good enough, you drop.

For there is no finality and ending place to intellect. Examine any bit of politics, any law-case, or domestic complication, until you understand your own reasons for feeling as you do about it. Then write the matter down carefully and conclusively, and you will find that you have done no more than restate the problem in a new form. The more complete your exposition, the more loudly it calls for new solution. The masterly analysis of Tolstoi, his accurate explanations, his diagnosis and dissection of human life, leave us with a picture of society that for unsolved mystery competes with the original. But the point lies here. You must lay bare your whole soul in the statement you make. You must resolutely set down everything that touches the matter. Until you do this, the question refuses to assume its next shape. You cannot flinch and qualify in your first book, and speak plainly in your second.

It is the act of utterance that draws out the powers in a man and makes him a master of his own mind. Without the actual experi-

ence of writing Lohengrin, Wagner could not have discovered Parsifal. The works of men who are great enough to get their whole thought uttered at each deliverance, form a progression like the deductions of a mathematician. These men are never satisfied with a past accomplishment. Their eyes are on questions that beckon to them from the horizon. Their faculties are replenished with new energy because they seek. They are driving their ploughs through a sea of thought, intent, unresting, resourceful, creative. They are discoverers, and just to the extent that lesser men are worth anything they are discoverers too.

Beauty and elevation flash from the currents set up by intense speculation. Beauty is not the aim of the writer. His aim must be truth. But beauty and elevation shine out of him while he is on the quest. His mind is on the problem; and as he unravels it and displays it, he communicates his own spirit, as it were incidentally, as it were unwittingly, and this is the part that goes out from him and does his work in the world.

V

PRINCIPLES

Speech is a very small part of human intercourse. Indeed speech is often not connected with the real currents of intercourse. A comic actor has made you happy before he has uttered a word. This is by the responsive vibration of your apparatus to his. The external speech and gesture help the transfer of power, and that is all they do. The communion, upon whatever plane of being it takes place, is a contagion, and goes forward by leaps and darts, like the action of frost on a window-pane. An angry friend comes into my room, and before he has uttered a word I am in a blaze of anger. A baby too young to speak does some naughty thing. I remonstrate with him in a rational way. Perhaps I repeat to him Kant's maxim from the Critique of Practical Reason. The child understands at once and is grateful for the treatment. Now, observe this, that if I said the same thing to a

grown man in the same tone, it would be to the tone and not to the argument that he would respond.

The exchange of energy between man and man is so rapid that language becomes a bystander. It is like the passage of the electrical current, — we receive an impression or a message, or twenty messages at once. All this is the result of suggestion and inference. No strange phenomenon is here alluded to. The situation is the normal and constant situation whenever two human beings meet. The only mystery about it is that our senses should be so much more acute than we knew. Ask a man to dinner and talk to him about the Suez Canal, and the next morning your wife will be apt to give a truer account of him than you can give. She has been knitting in the corner and thinking about the best place to buy children's shoes, but she knows which coils in her brain have been played upon by the brain of the stranger. The reason your wife knows that your Suez friend is no saint, is that she feels that certain strings of the benevolent harp that is sounding in herself are not being reinforced. There are dead notes in him.

The sensitiveness of children is so com-

mon a thing that we forget its explanation. It is just because the child cannot follow the argument, that he is free from the illusion that the argument is the main point. The lobes of his brain get a shock and respond to it ingenuously.

These facts have been neglected by philosophers, because the facts defy formulation. You cannot get them into a statement. They are life. But in the practical, workaday world, they have always been understood. Men of action owe their success to the habit of using their minds and bodies in a direct way. Men in every profession rely upon the accuracy of direct impressions. The great doctor, or the great general, or the great business man uses the whole of his sensibilities in each act of reading a man. There is no other way to read him correctly. People whose brains are preoccupied with formulated knowledge are not apt to be as good judges of character as spontaneous persons. Their thoughts are on logic. They follow what is said. A very small fraction of them is alive. They are like chess-players who are not listening to the opera.

The answer to any question in psychology always lies under our hand. We have only to ask what the normal man does. It will

be found that he uses his faculties according to their nature, though it may be, he is embryonic and inarticulate. We speak of great men as "simple," because they retain a sensitiveness to immediate impressions very common in uneducated persons and in children. Their thought subserves the direct currents of suggestion. Their instincts rule them. Their minds serve them. They are great because of this power to read the thoughts of others through the pores of their skin, and answer blindfold to unuttered appeals, whether of weakness or of strength. To do this means intellect, whether in Napoleon or Gladstone. Every pianist and public speaker, every actor and singer knows that his whole art consists in getting his intellectual apparatus into focus, so that the vibrations of his formulated thought shall correspond and fall in with the direct and spontaneous vibrations of his audience. This is truth, this is the discovery of law, this is art.

Men are profound and complicated creatures, and when any one of them expresses the laws of his construction and reveals his own natural history, he is called a genius. But he is a genius solely because he is comprehensible, and others say of him, "I

am like that." His suggestions carry. Their extreme subtlety baffles analysis, just as the suggestions of real life baffle analysis. The miracle of reality in art is due to refinement of suggestion. We cannot follow its steps or say how it is done. We see only the idea. Shakespeare gives you all the meaning, and none of the means. This is first-class artificial communication. It almost competes with the every-day, commonplace, familiar transfer of the incommunicable essence of life from man to man.

Our present problem is, how to influence people for their good. It is clear that when you and another man meet, the personal equation is the controlling thing. If you are more high-minded than he, the way to influence him is to stick to your own beliefs; for they alone can keep you high-minded. They alone can make you vibrate. It is they and not you that will do the work. There you stand, and there he stands; and you can only qualify him by the ideas that control you. It makes no difference whether you are an emperor and he a peasant, or you a Good Government Club man and he a merchant, the same forces are at work. Shift your ground, and he feels the shift; you are encouraging him to be shifty, like yourself.

What can you do for him except to follow your conscience? But this is equally true of every meeting of all men everywhere. You address a labor meeting and talk about the Philippines. You meet the Turkish Ambassador and talk about Kipling's poems. You talk to your son about kite-flying. To each of these contacts with another's mind you bring the same power. If you start with the psychical value of 6, no matter what you do, a cross-section of your whole activity in the world will at any instant of time read 6. It may be that a page of ciphering cannot express the formula, but it will mean 6.

The immense amount of thought that man has given, during the last few thousand years, to his social arrangements and his destiny, has filled our minds with tangled formulas, and has attached our affection to particular matters. The pomp of preambles and the stress of language stun us. There is so much of organized society. There are so many good ends. If there were only one man in the world, we know that it would be impossible to do good to him by suggesting evil. We know that if we gave him a hint that contained both good and evil, the good would do him good, and the evil, evil. If we were bent on nothing but benefit, we should

have to confine ourselves to suggestions of unalloyed virtue. But the world is such a tangle of personalities, that we do not hesitate to mix a little evil in the good we do, hoping that the evil will not be operative. We half believe that there may, somewhere in the community, be a hitch in the multiplication table that brings out good for evil. Liberty and democracy are thought to be such worthy ends, that we must obtain them by any means and all means, even by hiring mercenaries. Can we wonder that in the past, men's minds were staggered by the importance of a papacy or of some dynastic succession? To-day everybody jumps to shield vice because it is called republicanism or democracy. The irony of history could go no further.

Let us consider our local reforms by the light of these views. Civil service laws, ballot-reform, elections, taxation, — dissolve all these into acts and impulses, and see whether the laws of human influence do not make a short cut through them all, like X-rays. No matter what I talk about to the Emperor, I am really conveying to him by suggestion a tendency to become as good or as bad a man as I myself. Chinese Gordon turned a dynamo of personal force upon the

Orientals, and they understood him. He was talking religion, and he gave it to them straight. Now all religion, as everybody knows, is purely a matter of suggestion. But so is all other intercourse. We want honesty. Well, what makes people honest? Honesty. Does anything else spread the influence of honesty, except honesty? Are we here facing a scientific fact? Is this a law of the transference of human energy, or is it not? If it is, you cannot beat it. You cannot imagine any situation where your own total force, in favor of honesty, will consist of anything else than honesty. Of course you may put a case where honesty will result in somebody's death. If in that case, you want his life, why, lie. But what you will get will be his life, not the spread of honesty. If the event is chronicled, you will find it used as a means of justifying dishonesty forever afterwards.

We do not want any of these reforms except as a means of stimulating character, and it is a law of nature that character can only be stimulated directly. Sincerity is the only need, courage the all-sufficing virtue. We can dump them into every occasion, and sleep sound at night. What interest can any rational man have in our municipal

issues except as a grindstone on which to whet the people's moral sense? How is it possible to deceive ourselves into looking at our own political activity from any other standpoint than this? You are to make a speech at Cooper Union on ballot reform. Somebody says, "Do not mention the liquor question or you will lose votes." But some phase of that question seems to you pertinent and important. Shall you omit and submit? That would be an odd way of stimulating character. The need of the times is not ballot laws but sincerity. The maximum that any man can do toward the spread of sincerity is to display it himself.

All the virtues spread themselves by direct propagation; and the vices likewise. Our people are deficient in righteous indignation. When you see a man righteously indignant, rejoice; this is the seed, this the force. Nothing else will arouse courage but courage, faith but faith. You see, for instance, a knot of men who are really indignant at the injustice of the times. But their indignation seems to you a danger; because it is likely to defeat some candidate, some pet measure of yours. You wish to allay it. You wish yourself well rid of

this sacred indignation; it is inconvenient. Open your eyes to the light of science. Here is a spark of that fire with which everybody ought to be filled. All your scheming was only for the purpose of getting this fire. Then foment it.

Virtue then, is a mode of motion, or it is an attitude of mind in a human organism, which enables that organism to transmit virtue to others. But vice is also a mere attitude of mind by which vice is transmitted. We know less about the natural history of vice than we do of dipsomania and consumption; but we know this much, that the vices are co-related, and breed one another *in transitu;* the tendency being towards lighter forms in the later catchers. Avoid another's guilty side, and you reinforce it; sympathize with it, and you catch his disease, or some disease. I have held hands with my friend (who is in the wrong) over his family troubles, and it has given me the distemper for a week. The German actor, Devrient, went mad while studying the inmates of asylums, as a preparation to playing King Lear. It was not the living in asylums that drove him mad, but his sympathetic attitude toward the disease. This exposed him. Why is it we commend

the man whose antagonism to crooked work is so great that he shows a tempter the door before he has finished his proposition? Parleying is not only a danger; it is the beginning of the trouble itself.

It is very difficult and very odious offending people, by forcing them to see in which direction our wheels really go round; and yet the alternative is to have our machinery forced back to a standstill. We are interlocked with other people and cannot break free. We are held in place by fate, and played upon against our will. When you see cruelty going on before you, you are put to the alternative of interposing to stop it, or of losing your sensibility. There is a law of growth here involved. It is inexorable. You are at the mercy of it. You wish yourself elsewhere, but you are here; you are a mere illustration of pitiless and undying force. The part you take, may run through a fit of bad temper or malice. It may turn to covetousness or conceit, who can tell? Some poison has entered your eye because you looked negligently upon corruption. It will cost you some part of your sense of smell. "Use or lose," says Nature when she gives us capacities. What you condone, you support; what you neglect, you confirm.

It is true that your confirmation and support are managed through the mechanism of blindness. All the evil in the world receives its chief support from the people whose only connection with it is that they do not fight it, nor see it. Where politics is involved scarcely a man in America knows the difference between right and wrong. Our mayoralty contest five years ago would have left Lot searching for a man who could tell black from white. It was a clear moral issue. But it arose in politics: we could not see it. That we have intellectual cataract is entirely due to the habit of condoning embezzlement. It is a secondary form of the endemic theft, caught by the by-standers. The best people in town had it. If they had been lifting their hands against theft during the preceding years, they never would have caught it.

Of course we support all the good in the world, as well as all the evil; and the ratio in which we do both changes at every moment. It radiates forth from us, and is read correctly by every baby as he passes in his perambulator. Close thinking, and fresh observation of things too familiar to be noticed, bring us to this point.

Now, just as no complexity of institutions

affects the transfer of virtue, so none affects the transfer and propagation of vice. Yesterday you were all for virtue. You were for leading a revolution against the bosses, and were ready to work and subscribe and vote. You were a man with the heart of a man. But to-day you are chop-fallen. "The thing cannot be done. It is not the year." The degradation of your character is seen in your low spirits, and in the jaded and sophistical commonplaces you pour forth. I know the academical reasons for this change in you. I can express it in terms of ballot-law and civil service. But what is it that really has happened?

The power that has struck you was focalized the day before yesterday in the office of some law-broking politicians; and the direct rays of base passion have struck straight through stone walls and constitutions, and, falling upon you, have stopped your wheels. In them it was avarice and ambition. In you it is doubt. A drowsy inertia overcomes you, a blindness of the will. That is what has really happened. The rest is illusion and metaphysical talk. See, now, the real curse of injustice; it takes away the sight from the eyes, and that in a night.

Is it not perfectly natural that Tammany Hall should be everywhere, at all tables, in all churches, in all consciences, when these electrical currents run between man and man and connect them so easily?

I read in the newspaper that a well-known man is at Albany in the interests of a gas deal. He cannot get his way in the city, and is putting up a job with the legislature. I see the thing going through, — a thing utterly cynical, utterly corrupt. No paper will explain it because it cannot be explained without names; besides, the names own the papers. Everybody understands it; nobody minds it. Is any statute here at fault? Will any legislation cure this? If the moral sensibility of our people should become tensified by twenty per cent in twenty-four hours, twenty per cent of all our iniquities in every department would cease in forty-eight hours. Government is carried on by the lightning of personal suggestion which flashes through the community from day to day and from moment to moment. Those things are done which are demanded or are tolerated at the instant they are done.

I read in a newspaper that a syndicate has been formed to light the city. It is backed by the men who control the city administra-

tion, and they are now blackmailing the existing company to its ruin. Can I escape the knowledge of this thing? Alas, too easily: I own stock in it.

At first we think the legislature makes the laws, then we see it is done by a cabal, then by people behind the cabal, finally by the million bonds of popular prejudice which tie each man up with the times.

Look closely, take some particular man, and consider why it is that he does not spend his whole time in fighting for virtue. It will turn out, that in some form or other, he is a beneficiary of these evils, and has not the energy to fight them. One man depends upon the *status quo* for his living, the next is held by affection for his friends, by the ties of old prejudice, by inertia, by hopelessness. Which of them is the more deeply injured victim of tyranny, — the active self-seeker or the listless man, the Tammany boy or the American gentleman?

Every man bears a direct and discoverable share in the responsibility. A janitor keeps his place through Tammany influence, a young lawyer gets business by keeping his mouth shut. Follow out the lines leading from any man, no matter how obscure he is, and they will lead you to the ante-chamber

where gigantic business has its offices, where the highest functionaries of commerce and politics meet. The business world is all one organization. It is a sort of secret society, a great web. No matter where you touch it, the same spiders come out.

The boss system, then, appears as the visible part of all the private selfishness in America. It is a great religion of self-interest, with its hierarchy, its chapels, its propaganda, and its confessors in every home. You yourself support it. I saw last week, at your table, a magnate whose business conduct you deplore, and to-day I heard a young man make the comment, that there was no use fighting the current so long as social influence could be bought. Do not accuse Tammany Hall; you yourself have corrupted that young man. So long as you think you can circumvent the laws of force, you will remain a pillar in the temple of iniquity.

But look closer still at each of those individuals, and see just what it is he is giving as the purchase money. One man gives $25,000 to pay a president's private debts, and goes as minister to England; another gives merely his name to indorse a doubtful candidate for the assembly, and receives prospective good will from the organization.

What is this great market overt where every one can get what he wants? The syndicate can get the franchises, and the aldermen the cash. No one is too small to be served, or so great as to require nothing. Upon what principle is this monstrous bazaar, this clearing-house for self-interest, conducted? It is as large as the United States — the transcontinental railroads use it — and so well managed that I can get my friend a job as the secretary of a reform movement. What is it that makes this universal shop run so smoothly? It is hooked together simply on business principles. The price you pay is always the rubbing of somebody the right way; the thing you get is advancement or personal comfort of some sort. It has happened, that by the operation of commercial forces, the whole of America's seventy million people have been polarized into self-seekers; and our total condition is visibly Vanity Fair. You can actually follow the rays of power from the individual to the boss. All the evil in the world is seen to be in league. Embezzlement and laziness, selfish ambition and prejudice, cruelty and timidity here openly play into each other's hands, support and console each other. Nay, every atom of vice, every im-

pulse of malice or cupidity, can be shown up as a tendon or a sinew of the great organization of selfish forces. It is as if a magic glass had been superposed upon the continent, and, looking down through it, upon the motives of men, all complexity vanished, and we saw all the evil forces pulling one way.

The same thing has always been true in every society; but the names, powers, superstitions have been so extremely complicated that no one could follow the laws of interlocking motive, except by inference and prophetic insight. Take the case of a very selfish man fighting his way up through society in the reign of Louis XVIII. He meets a Bourbon influence, an ecclesiastical influence, a Napoleonic influence, a republican influence. He grapples with every man he meets, using the hooks of self-interest in that man. The forces at work under Louis XVIII. were as simple as with us. Only the nomenclature is different, and more complex. It is easy in America to see the working of one man's selfishness upon another's. Let alone the market overt, it is easy to trace the subtle social relations, when they are for the bad. It was easy to follow the effect of your conduct in asking the dis-

honest business magnate to dinner, because the young man spoke of it. He was shocked and injured. But we also found out by the episode that before you did the thing, you were really a factor for good in his life, holding up his conscience and his ideals.

The inexpressible subtlety in the mechanism of man makes the transmission of the force for good as easy as that of the force for evil. They are of the same character, and very often flow through the same channels. There is no more mystery in the one case than in the other.

Consider what is done in the course of any practical movement for reform. A bad bill is pending at Albany. In order to beat it, a party of men whose characters are trusted, get on a train, and the whole State watches them proceed to Albany. This is often enough to defeat a measure. The good their pilgrimage does, is done then and there instantly, by example, by suggestion. If, when they get to Albany, they sell out their cause, the harm they do is done then and there by example, by suggestion. They make some concession which lessens friction but suggests Tammany Hall. This is the only part of the transaction that reaches the great public. Ask the laboring

man and he will give you a digest of the whole episode in a shrug. If a reform candidate is running on the platform "Thou shalt not steal," and the boss desires to corrupt him, the boss asks him to drop in for a chat. If he goes, every one hears of it the next day, and every one is a little corrupted himself. A thousand well-meaning men say he did right. Had he resisted, these same men would have cried "Bravo!" and thereafter taken a higher view of human nature. It is by a succession of such minute shocks of good or bad example that communities are affected. The truth seems to be that our lives are ruled by laws of influence which are in themselves exceedingly direct. But the operation of them is concealed from us by our preoccupation over details.

It is impossible to regard these matters in too simple a light. Nothing is ever involved except the contagious impulse that makes one man yawn when he sees another man yawn. Both the good and the evil in the world run upon the winds. Moses' habit of falling upon his face before the congregation, and calling God to witness that he could lead them no longer, was not a political trick done to frighten the people into submission by the threat of abandoning

them. It was a sincere act of devotion; but it was also the most powerful form of appeal. He did the act; they followed in it, and thus made him absolute. Lincoln's anecdotes and fables consisted of nothing but suggestion. They were one source of his power. The first thing a tyrant does is to suppress cartoons. Here we have something that is often sheer pantomime, and yet it is one of the most effective vehicles in the world. It was the only thing Platt could not stand. Within two years he has tried to stop it by legislation.

If you are to reach masses of people in this world, you must do it by a sign language. Whether your vehicle be commerce, literature, or politics, you can do nothing but raise signals, and make motions to the people. In literature this is obvious. The more far-reaching any truth is, the shorter grow its hieroglyphics. The great truths can only be given in hints, phrases, and parables. They lie in universal experience, and any comment belittles them. They are like the magnetic poles that can only be pointed out with a needle. Take any profound saying about life, and see if it does not imply short-hand, a sort of telegraphy as the ordinary means of communication be-

tween men. "He that loseth his life shall save it." Here we have a poem, a system of ethics and a psychology. Or take any bit of worldly wisdom, "Money talks." Here we have the whole philosophy of materialism. Does any one imagine that political bargains are reduced to writing? It would be injurious to the conscience. They are made by the merest hints on all sides. Every one is left free.

The extreme case of the power of suggestion is seen in the stock-market, where a rumor that Banker A has dined with Railroad President B drives values up or down. Cleveland's Venezuela message makes a panic. The different parts of the financial world live, from day to day, in instantaneous and throbbing communication. This is one side of the popular life. Its thermometer is sensitive, and records one thousandth of a degree as readily as the political thermometer records a single degree. But the principle is the same. All the people run the stock-market, and all the people run politics. There has never been any difficulty in reaching the whole people with ideas. Even a private man can do it. But he must act them out.

VI

PRINCIPLES (*continued*).

SUPPOSE a small child steals jam in the pantry. So long as he pretends that he did not do it, or did not know it was wrong, he suffers a certain oppression.

You can explain to an intelligent child that if he tells the whole truth about the thing, the telling will cost him pain and leave him happy. But you cannot save him the pain. So long as he persists in lying, some of his faculties lie under an inhibition; the vital energies flow past them instead of through them. The first shock of a through passage gives a spasm of pain, and then the child is happy. It is one of the facts of the world that moral awakening is accompanied by pain.

The quarrel that the world has with its agitators is that they do really agitate. People express this by saying that the men are dangerous or have bad taste. The epithets vary with the age. They are intended

to excite public contempt, and they embody the aversions of society. In a martial age the reformer is called a molly-coddle; in a commercial age an incompetent, a disturber of values; in a fanatical age, a heretic. If an agitator is not reviled, he is a quack.

These epithets are mere figures of speech. What they really express is suffering caused by the workings of conscience. And so in any educational movement that runs across the country, there is always a track of pain turning to happiness. When we get in the path of one of these things, we find that the division between contending ideas passes through the individual man. It does not fall between men. The struggle is always the struggle of forces within an individual. A is trying to convince B. The struggle in A's mind is to make the matter clear, in B's mind to make the opposite clear. In the course of time one view prevails; but the struggle continues, for B occupies A's position and is now struggling to convince C. It is in this way that a movement runs through a community. The firing line passes through a series of individuals, and as they succumb, through them to the next.

If you take any particular case of conflict,

you will find that the man is divided between two courses, one of which is disagreeable because it involves effort and sacrifice and offence. The other is agreeable because it involves personal ease or personal advancement. The two motives in man result from the structure of his brain, whose operations we are obliged to accept: we cannot amend them; they are the facts of psychology.

It would seem as if the brain of man were so constituted that at the moment of its full operation the man himself disappears. His consciousness becomes wholly occupied with impersonal interests. Thus, in the process of thought, a man begins to see his own personal interests threatened. If he continues to think, they must vanish. This is the struggle between right and wrong. It is really a struggle between two attitudes of mind. It is the experience we suffer when the mind is passing from the self-regardant to the non-self-regardant attitude.

Perhaps the discomfort of doing one's duty is an inseparable incident of the storage of energy, and the pleasure of neglecting one's duty, an incident of the leakage of energy. When I get up and poke the fire, because I see it will go out if I don't, I return to my

chair a more energetic being than I was the moment before. At any rate, our oscillation between two states of consciousness has preoccupied mankind from the earliest times, and has given rise to all the dualistic philosophies. The great fact as to the reality of the struggle is proved to us, not merely by our own consciousness, but because we can see the logical results of it everywhere in society.

A community is a collection of palpitating animals. Each of us is one of them, and each of us receives and transmits millions of impressions hourly. We get heard. We have our exact weight and force. There is no difficulty about our power of intercourse. Indeed it is the thing we cannot get away from. No man walks by himself. Between his feet and the ground are invisible pedals that play upon, and are played upon by other men. You cannot live or move except by transmitting influence. The whole of practical life is made up of contact with the passions of others. A lawyer or a broker is like an engineer who sits behind his machine, managing its levers and its stopcocks. A trader, a writer, or a philanthropist, a laborer or a clergyman, does nothing but open and shut valves in other people. There

is no other way of serving your fellows; there is no other way of earning your living or of wasting your substance.

We saw that in politics it was impossible to draw a dividing line anywhere in that series of men whose joint activity and inactivity held up what we call the evils of politics. Money interest shaded off into prejudice, and that into mistaken loyalty, and that into indifference. The striking truth about the whole series was that it showed different shades of selfishness, lack of energy, and inability to use the mind accurately. So also any unselfish or accurate use of his mind by the laborer or by the journalist was, as we saw, apt to throw him out of employment.

In politics and in morals, all that we condemn, turns out on inspection to be mere selfishness. But anything in the world that we dislike, turns out, on inspection, to be self-regardant effort or avoidance of effort. Bad art may show the gross selfishness of the pot-boiler, or the refined laziness of prejudice, or the mere weakness that was unable to see the world for itself, and has been forced to see it with some one else's eyes. It is a makeshift. So of bad carpentry or bad cooking. There is no such special prov-

ince in life as morality. Each man regards that thing as immoral which he sees to be selfish. A proofreader will show the same indignation over a careless job, that a musician shows over a weak phrasing.

The unimaginable subtlety of our comprehension enables us to detect selfishness in arts of whose methods we know nothing; we read it like large print. To speak accurately, all we get from any communication is a transcript, an image, a picture of the author's thought, the jar of intellect and character. Is it supposed that communication between men goes forward by ratiocination, or that education is a thing taken in by linear measurement? Thought cannot creep, but only fly. It proceeds by the magic of stimulation. A good judge can read a good brief almost as fast as he can turn the pages. If a thing is well put, it is almost our own before it is said. Ideas pass into us so quickly that Plato thought we knew them in a former existence. This is due to the subtlety of our apprehension. We are not satisfied except by an appeal so refined that our only sensation is one of being made more alive. "Rien ne me choque" was Chopin's highest praise. What wonder, then, that we resent the self-sufficiency of

any inferior mind? The whole of life is no more than a series of pulsations, and all the books and Bibles, sign-boards, music-boxes, and telegraph wires are the machinery by which in one way or another the mind of man touches the mind of man. The world has been going on for so long that we have many such devices, and out of the millions that have been made, all but the very best get discarded as old lumber. These things are the language of the unselfish force upon the globe. It is much nearer truth to think of them as a single influence than as multifarious. Their origin and tendency, their practical utility, the veneration in which they are held, bind them together and make them one. For the world values the seer above all men, and has always done so. Nay, it values all men in proportion as they partake of the character of seers. The Elgin Marbles and a decision of John Marshall are valued for the same reason. What we feel in them is a painstaking submission to facts beyond the author's control, and to ideas imposed upon him by his vision. So with Beethoven's Symphonies, with Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations," — with any conceivable output of the human mind of which you approve. You love them because

you say, "These things were not made, they were seen."

Thus the forces of an unselfish sort upon the globe are cumulative. The dead heroes fight on forever, and the dead mathematicians expound forever. It is true that the organization of the selfish forces is overwhelmingly visible, and that of the unselfish ones invisible. Napoleon is seen by his contemporaries; Spinoza is not seen. The reason is simple. The man who wants something must have an office address. But the man who wants nothing for himself, but spends his whole time in so using his mind that he himself disappears, lives only as an influence in the minds of others. He is a song, a theory, a proposition in algebra. These two conflicting forms of force are then flashed up and down, forward and back ceaselessly, through and across every social meeting, through and across society. The novelists and playwrights deal with this instantaneous interplay of motive; and the time-honored analysis of self for self on the villain's side, and sacrifice for principle on the hero's side is a true thing. It is a fair abstract of the world.

You can illustrate in an instant the immediacy of these two hierarchies of power under

which we live and from which we cannot escape. The selfish ones need not be named; they oppress us. But the unselfish ones are equally near. If you take any bit of poetry or speech or writing that you consider great, and examine it, you will find that it illustrates the logical coherence of all the ideas and feelings that make you happy; it is a digest of a law of influence. Or conversely, if you set about to illustrate some experience, and if you can get it profoundly and accurately stated as what you believe to be the bottom truth, it will turn under your hands into something familiar. If you are successful, it will be a kind of poetry.

VII

CONCLUSION

THERE is force enough in ordinary sunshine to turn all the mills in the world; and there is beneficent energy enough in any community to make the people perfectly happy. But it is cramped and deflected, poisoned by misuse, and turned to hateful ends. The question is how to liberate energy.

People are fond of thinking the millennium is impossible; but so long as happiness is dependent on a right use of the faculties, there is no reason why the millennium should not be reached, and that soon or unexpectedly. We all know individuals so harmoniously framed that we say, "If theirs were the common temper of mankind, we should be happy." None of the externals of life, about which there is so much buffeting, control the question. Happiness is in a nutshell. Anybody can have it. You are happy if you get out of bed on the right side. I can never stop wondering at the awful

simplicity of the principle on which mankind is constructed. Little Alice in the Looking-Glass could not reach the porch till she turned her back on it and walked straight into the door. Renounce the search for happiness and you find the substance. There is nothing else in the law and the prophets.

We see most men like tee-totums spinning to the left and leading a dismal life. How shall we get their motive power to spin them to the right, and make them happy? The practical question is: how to use the power of sunlight to turn our mills. How can we hold up a prism to the times that shall disintegrate these rays of complex force, and then adjust a lens that shall focus the powers of good and make them turn the wheels of society? The elements are before us, ceaselessly in motion. *πάντα ῥεῖ.* The most adamantine institutions are cloud palaces. There is no stability anywhere; and if you have a steady eye you will see that the whole fabric is in a flux. Nor are the changes arbitrary. The formations and re-formations are governed by laws as certain as those of astronomy. Study the changes and you will find the laws. Subserve the laws and you can affect the formations. Julius Cæsar did no more.

CONCLUSION

The strands of prejudice and passion that bind people together pulsate with life. All these fellow-citizens are human beings, and there is no one of them whom we cannot understand, reach, influence. The ordinary modes of intercourse are at hand. Chief among them you find the great machinery of government. It dwarfs every other agency, whether for good or ill. In America this machinery was designed to be at the service of anybody. It is an advertising agency for ideas, and it is very much more than this; since the fact that a man is to vote forces him to think. You may preach to a congregation by the year and not affect its thought because it is not called upon for definite action. But throw your subject into a campaign and it becomes a challenge. You can get assent to almost any proposition so long as you are not going to do anything about it. And on the other hand, no amount of verbal proof will justify a new thought until it has been put in practice.

Alas for ink and paper! There is in all speech and writing a conventional presumption that human beings shall be logical, or fixed quantities, or at least coherent creatures. For the purposes of an essay or a speech, you prove your case, and carry weight

accordingly. If you are very cogent and conclusive, why, you win. Hurrah! the world is saved. But in real life there are no fixed quantities; all the terms are variables.

For example, everybody understands what is meant by the "Moral Law." People differ only as to the application of that law. Not long ago I heard a sermon on this law, in which great stress was laid on the fact that it was a discovered law whereby the truth prevailed. Any truce with evil meant defeat for the cause of righteousness. This was the law of God, tested by experience, and in constant operation like the law of gravity, a thing you could not escape. The preacher pictured the solitary struggle of the great man seeking truth, his proclamation of the truth, the refusal of the world to receive it, and the prophet's isolation and apparent failure. Nevertheless what the prophet said had always the same content. It was an appeal to the instincts of man upon the question of right and wrong, and in the end it was accepted.

Now the man who made this exposition, and it was admirable, is in regard to politics a believer in compromise. I think I have never known him support the idealist cause in a campaign; and upon most occasions of

crisis he is found heartily throwing stones at the crusaders.

What words in any language can make this man understand that his law — which he really does profoundly understand as a law — applies to reform movements? Why, no words will do it, only example. New statements about morality, however eloquent, add nothing to our knowledge. Everything is known about the moral law, except how you yourself will act under given circumstances. You have nothing but example to contribute.

People interrogate force. They are unconvinced, and are carried, still protesting, through the air and deposited in a new place. And then, thereafter, they agree with you about the whole matter. Mere intellectual assent to your proposition is, even when you can get it, worth nothing. Your object is not to confute, but to stimulate. What you really want is that every man you meet shall drop his business and devote his entire life and energy to your cause. You will accept nothing less than this. Is it not clear that people are not moved by logic? Your conduct must ultimately square with reason and be justified by the laws of the universe and the constitution of other people's minds;

but you must value only that approval which comes from the deeper fibres in men. You need not be concerned about the bickerings of contemporary misunderstanding. Leave these for the historical society. Act first — explain afterwards. That is the way to get heard. Must you show your passport and certificate of birth and legitimacy to every editor and every lackey? They 'll find out who you are by and by. It is easier to knock a man down than to say why you do it. The act is sometimes needed, and wisdom then approves it after the event. People who love soft methods and hate iniquity forget this, — that reform consists in taking a bone from a dog. Philosophy will not do it.

Such are the practical dictates of agitation. Their justification lies always with events. It may be that you must wait seven centuries for an audience, or it may be that in two years your voice will be heeded. If you are really a forerunner of better times, the times will appear and explain you. It will then turn out that your movement was the keynote of the national life. You really differed from your neighbors only in this, — that your mind had gone faster than theirs along the road all were travelling.

We are all slaves of the age; we can only see such principles as society reveals. The philosophy of other ages does us little good. We repeat the old formulas and cry up the prophets; but we see no connection between the truth we know so well in print and its counterpart in real life. The moral commonplaces, as, for instance, "Honesty is the best policy," "A single just man can influence an entire community," "Never compromise a principle," are social truths. They are always true, but they are only obviously true in very virtuous communities. In a vile community the influence of a just man is potent but not visible. In a perfectly virtuous era it is clear that a cheat could not drive a fraudulent trade.

A seer is a man with such sharp eyes for cause and effect that he sees social truth, even under unfavorable conditions. And yet even the seers generally had auspicious weather, — that is to say, storms of moral passion. The whole race of Jews lived in fervent exaltation for generations, and revealed to their sharp-sighted prophets deep glimpses of social truth. Hence the Bible. "A prophet is not without honor save in his own country." What happy precision! What sound generalization! But every town-

ship in Israel had its prophet, and the truth was a commonplace.

All the world's moral wisdom would turn into literal truth upon the regeneration of society. It tends to become obvious in regenerative eras. In dark ages it becomes paradox. Standards are multiplied, and makeshift theories come in, — one rule for social conduct, another for business, another for politics. Expedient supplants principle. Indeed you may gauge the degradation of an age by the multiplicity of its standards. It is the same with the fine arts. To the men that made the statues and the pictures, these things were the shortest symbols of truth, and required no explanation. In the dark ages that followed they became a mystery and a paradox. But the traditions and objects survived and had to be accounted for. An age that cannot produce them requires a philosophy of æsthetics. Thus a thousand reasons are given to explain their existence, and finally it is agreed that they are something superfluous and fictitious, — conventional lies, like poetry, like loving your neighbor.

Nothing but a general increase of interest in the aspect of common things would explain to us the great masters. A revival of

interest in the way the world looks is the precursor of painting: the perceptions of every one are quickening. And so we may be sure that we are upon the edge of a better era when the old moral commonplaces begin to glow like jewels and the stones to testify.

You cannot expect any one but a scientist to be startled at the movement of a glacier. But if you distribute a few micrometric instruments upon that gloomy ice-field, the American civic consciousness, and if you take observations not oftener than once in three years, you will be startled. The direction of the general movement is absolutely right. But it all moves together. Special signs of progress imply general progress, and hence comes the extraordinary and scientific interest in the awakening of this community. It is like a man lapsed into the deepest coma who is beginning to stir. Watch him, take his pulse, surround him with every apparatus of experimental physiology, and you will find the laws of health, the norm of progress.

Art and literature, and that moral atmosphere which makes a society worth moving in, lie on the other side of the great reaction, the spiritual revival which we see

now faintly beginning; and it is because these things can be got at only by stimulating American character that these reform movements are of value. Here at least the circulation throbs. Political reform — that is to say, a political life in which men who are personally honest predominate, a politics run by ideas — will come in as fast as the public develops ideas, and not before. But an idea is something very different from what you who read this think it is. An idea is a thing that governs your conduct all the time. For instance, you assent to the notion of independence in politics; you understand the lost-cause theory, but you won't vote the ticket. Why? You don't want to get out of your class. The relations between thought and action in you are not normal. Half of your brain has never functioned, and the paralysis shows in your politics. You have no idea. It is not this sort of idea that expels rascals or makes books or music. What passes for political thought in your vocabulary is like the phantasma in the brain of the Indian priest who is buried with the corn growing above him. The average educated man in America has about as much knowledge of what a political idea is as he has of the

principles of counterpoint. Each is a thing used in politics or music which those fellows who practise politics or music manipulate somehow. Show him one and he will deny that it is politics at all. It must be corrupt or he will not recognize it. He has only seen dried figs. He has only thought dried thoughts. A live thought or a real idea is against the rules of his mind.

Imagine a tea-party of pre-Raphaelites discussing Dante; they dote on his style, his passion, his force, his quality. In walks Dante, grim, remorseless, harsh, powerful. The man represents everything they hate. He is a horror and an outrage. The whole region of literature that these men live in is not more fictitious than the region of political thought in which the effete American — I mean your banker, your college president, your writer of editorial leaders — lives. Exclude for the moment those who are financially corrupt and consider only the men of intellect, and in all that concerns politics they are as removed from real ideas as Rossetti was removed from the real Dante.

Imagine a company of people on a voyage. They play whist with one another for dimes, and they spend all their money on the steward and continue to play with counters, and

the ship goes to wreck, and they sit on the beach and continue to play with pebbles. That is American politics. The whole thing is one gigantic sham, one transcendent fraud.

It makes no difference which man is made president; it makes no difference which is governor. There is no choice between McKinley and Bryan, between Republicanism and Democracy. There is no difference between them. They are one thing. They both and all of them are part of the machinery by which the government of a most dishonest nation is carried on, for the financial benefit of certain parties, — certain thousands of men who have bank accounts and eat and drink and bring up their families on the proceeds of this complicated swindle.

There is no reality in a single phrase uttered in politics, no meaning in one single word of any of it. There is no man in public life who stands for anything. They are shadows; they are phantasmagoria. At best they cater to the better elements; at worst they frankly subserve the worst. There is no one who stands for his own ideas himself, by himself, a man. If American politics does not look to you like a joke, a tragic dance; if you have enough blindness left in

you, on any plea, on any excuse, to vote for the Democratic party or the Republican party (for at present machine and party are one), or for any candidate who does not stand for a new era, — then you yourself pass into the slide of the magic-lantern; you are an exhibit, a quaint product, a curiosity of the American soil. You are part of the problem, and you must be educated and drawn forward towards real life. This process is going on. As the community returns to life, it sees the natural world for a moment and then forgets it. The blood flushes the brain and then recedes You yourself voted once against both parties, when you thought you could win, and when you were excited. You quoted Isaiah and I know not what poetry, and were out and out committed to principle; but to-day you are cold and hopeless. At present, hope is a mystery to you. Nevertheless the utility of those early reform movements survives. They heated the imagination of the people till the people had a momentary vision of truths which not all of them forgot; and so each year the temperature has been higher, the mind of the community clearer.

We must not regard those broken reeds, the renegade leaders of reform movements,

as villains; though the mere record of their words and conduct might prove them such. They have been men emerging from a mist. They see clearly for a moment, and then clouds sweep before them. Vanity, selfishness, ambition, tradition, habit, intervene like a fog. They have been betrayed, too, by the fickle public, that would not stand by them when in trouble. In the recapture of any institution by the forces of honesty there are trenches that get filled by slaughtered honor.

This whole revolution means the invasion of politics by new men. At first they are tyros, unstable, untried, well-meaning fellows. Half of them crack in the baking. But there are more coming, and the fibre is growing tougher and the eyes clearer; soon we shall have men. A great passion is soon to replace the feeble conscientious motive that has hitherto brought the new men forward: ambition, — the ambition to stand for ideas, for ideas only, and to get heard. We have almost forgotten that public life is the natural ambition of every young man. Conditions have made it contemptible. But these struggles signify that a change in those conditions has already begun. Your work and mine may be summed up in one

word. Make it possible for a young man to go into public life untarnished, and as an enemy to every extant evil. You must have men who will not go except on these terms. The times herald such men. They will appear. We must prepare for them.

The reason for the slow progress of the world seems to lie in a single fact. Every man is born under the yoke, and grows up beneath the oppressions of his age. He can only get a vision of the unselfish forces in the world by appealing to them, and every appeal is a call to arms. If he fights he must fight, not one man, but a conspiracy. He is always at war with a civilization. On his side is proverbial philosophy, a galaxy of invisible saints and sages, and the half-developed consciousness and professions of everybody. Against him is the world, and every selfish passion in his own heart. The instant he declares war, every inducement is offered to make him stop. "Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail" intervene. The instant he stops fighting he is allied with the enemy: he is bought up by prejudice or by fatigue. He begins to realize the importance of particular visible institutions, as if their sole value did not come

from the fraction of unselfishness they represent. He rushes headlong into trade, and thenceforth can see his country only as a series of trade interests. He gets into some church and begins to value its organization, or into some party and begins to value its past, or into some club and begins to value his friends' feelings. The consequence is that you may search Christendom and hardly find a man who is free. The advance of the world, like the improvement of our local politics, has always been the work of young men. It is done by men before their minds have been worn into ruts by particular businesses, or their sight shortened by the study of near things. What we love in the young is not their youth, but their force. The energy that runs through them makes them sensitive. They feel the importance of remote things, and infer the relations of the present to the future more truly than their elders. They are touched by hints. The direct language of humanity is plain and native to them. The invisible waves of force which do as a matter of fact rule the world, using its fictions and its phrases as mere transmitting-plates, strike keenly upon the heart of the youth, and the vibrations of instinctive passion that shake his frame

are the response of a strong creature to the laws of its universe. This unlearned knowledge of good and evil is like the response of the eyes to light or of the tongue to the taste of a fruit. It was not indoctrinated; it is a reaction to a stimulus.

So long as the world shall last, men will be writing books in order to explain and justify the instincts; inventing theologies and ethical codes, and projecting political programs to advance and confirm them.

If you take up some particular matter and begin to trace out its consequences upon mankind, you find yourself forced boldly to embrace the sum of all human destiny. We cannot follow out this course in detail. We see only tendency; we see only influence. Enlarge our horizon as we will, we cannot live out the lives of all future generations, and thus furnish an answer to the first caviller who interrupts our argument with a "cui bono." The generous impulses of youth represent a vision of consequences. They take in more of the future at one glance than a philosopher can state in a year.

Certainly, so far as we can follow out the threads of influence, the lines seem to converge. They make a figure and point to a

conclusion exactly upon that spot in the firmament where instinct would place it. If philosophy gives us a diagram, the rest of life fills it up, and embellishes it with infinite illustration. The proofs multiply, and are hurled in upon us from all quarters of life and all provinces of endeavor. The anecdotes and fables of the world, its drama, its poetry and fiction, its religion and piety, its domestic teaching and its monuments support this instinct, and describe the same figure. Further still, there is not a man who does not reveal it in his soul's anatomy: so much so that upon every occasion except where his interests are touched, he is for virtue, and even where they are touched, it is only a question of a few degrees more heat to dissolve the habits and prejudices of a lifetime, and make him take off his coat and go into a war or a political campaign.

A single man, as we see him in one of the great modern civilizations, looks like a bit of machinery, a cog or a crank or an air-brake. The business man is especially mechanical, his functions are so accurate, so delimited and specialized. And yet any theory that dwells upon these limitations is put to shame in five minutes, for the creature eats and sheds tears before your eyes.

All of the reasons for not doing some particular act that you think wise to be done, turn out to be founded on the idea that this man is a driving-wheel, and nothing but a driving-wheel. You cannot change him, they say, you must take him as he is. I have never heard any argument given against the wisdom of righteousness, except the existence of evil. "It exists, therefore subserve it." Is it not clear that evil exists only because people subserve it? It has no fixity. Withdraw your support and it begins to perish. One man says, "Oh, let the world go. All the wickedness and unhappiness in it are inevitable." Another says, "Some little concession to present conditions must be made." Nothing can be said to justify the second man that is not moral support to the first. Your concession is always the acknowledgment of somebody's weakness. Now you may make allowances for a man who has not come up to the mark; but if you make allowances for him beforehand, and assume that he is not going to do right, you corrupt him. If these things are true, then we are absolved from all complicity with vice. We need never take a course that requires to be explained. We thus get rid of a great oppression and can breathe

freely. In the language of the old piety, Christian's pack falls from his back. That pack has, in all ages, been a perversion of the conscience, a mistake as to the size of the universe.

We have seen all these ranks and armies of humanity pass in review before us, each man with his eyes fixed in mesmeric intensity upon some set of opinions, until he grew to be the thing he looked on. These opinions of his are all we know of him. They are not our own opinions. They often appear to us misguided and illusory; yet there is always to be found in them the light of some benevolence. They are like broken mirrors and give back fractions of a larger idea. The hope and courage in each of these men bless and advance the world; but not in the way that the men themselves expect. They seem all to be bent over a game of chess, where every move has its real significance upon another board which they do not see. Each man seems to be following some will-o'-the-wisp across a landscape at night. No cannon can waken these insensate sleepers. And yet they are tracing out patterns and geometrical diagrams upon the sward; they are weaving a magical dance that, for all its intricacy, has

a planetary rhythm, and the sober motion of a pendulum. Each individual in this unthinkable host gives an instance of the same fatality; first, that he becomes the thing he looks on, and second, that he accomplishes something that he does not understand.

And both parts of this fatality must hold true of ourselves. Certainly, our subjection to the thing we look on is almost pitiable. We cannot even remember a righteous hatred without beginning to take color from the thing we hate. Our goodness comes solely from thinking on goodness; our wickedness from thinking on wickedness. We too are the victims of our own contemplation.

As for the last half of that fatality, that keeps us forever ignorant of the true meaning of our lives, it is not an absolute ignorance, like our ignorance of how we came to exist. It is a qualified ignorance, like our ignorance that we have hurt some one's feelings. The elements of understanding are within us: to-morrow the whole matter may become clear. The borders of our understanding extend, as we push outward our frontier of inquiry. This is both a frontier of scepticism, and of faith. It is a bulwark of doubt as to the value of our last new

formula, and of faith as to the reality behind that formula. As we go forward, bringing our lives down to date, holding our experience at arm's length and examining it with a merciless endeavor to wring the truth out of it, we do, from day to day, get a clearer notion of the actual world, a truer idea of our own place in it. This qualified and modest understanding of life, that comes from putting things together that seem to go together, is within the power of any one.

And we find this: the more unselfish men become, the more sensitive do they become in understanding human relations. The gambler cannot see that he is giving pain to his family; his self-indulgence has blunted his sensibilities. The faith healer knows that he is curing a man in a neighboring State; his love for mankind has refined his sensibilities. Most of us stand somewhere between these two extremes in the scale of understanding, and are moving towards one or the other. Education, then, is the process by which we gradually discover both the real nature of the human life about us, and our own relation to the whole of it. The process is never complete. Even poets and great men are in the dark about their own func-

tion; but they are less in the dark than the rest of us. They speak from a knowledge that is greater than ours. They have a wonderful power over us; for they help us in our struggle to see the world as it is.

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